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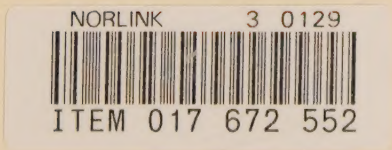

THE NEWMARKET, BURY, THETFORD, AND CROMER ROAD

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The Oxford, Gloucester, and Milford Haven Road. [*In the Press.*

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THE NORWICH MAIL IN A THUNDERSTORM ON THETFORD HEATH. *From a print after J. Pollard.*

The Newmarket, Bury, Thetford, and Cromer Road

SPORT AND HISTORY ON AN EAST ANGLIAN TURNPIKE

By CHARLES G. HARPER

Author of "*The Brighton Road*," "*The Portsmouth Road*," "*The Dover Road*," "*The Bath Road*," "*The Exeter Road*," "*The Great North Road*," "*The Norwich Road*," "*The Holyhead Road*," "*The Cambridge, Ely, and King's Lynn Road*," "*Stage-Coach and Mail in Days of Yore*," and "*The Ingoldsby Country*."

Illustrated by the Author, and from Old-Time Prints and Pictures

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TO

SIR WALTER GILBEY, Bart.,

AS SOME

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF FAVOURS RECEIVED,

THESE RECORDS OF A ROAD

TO HIM

PECULIARLY INTIMATE.

PREFACE

I TELL the Tale of the Road, with scraps of gossip and curious lore,
With a laugh, or a sigh, and a tear in the eye for the joys and sorrows of yore:
What were they like, those sorrows and joys, you ask, O Heir of the Ages:
Read, then, mark, learn, and perpend, an you will, from these gossipy pages.

Here, free o'er the shuddery heath, where the curlew calls shrill to his mate,
Wandered the Primitive Man, in his chilly and primitive state;

Unkempt and shaggy, reckless of razor, of comb, or of soap:
Hunted, lived, loved, and died, in untutored and primitive hope.

For what did he hope, that picturesque heathen, hunter of fur and of feather?
For a Better Land, with weapons to hand, much quarry, and fine hunting weather.
Now white runs the devious road, o'er the trackless space that he trod,
Who hunted the heath, and died, and yielded his primitive soul unto God.

Briton and conquering Roman, Iceni, Saxon, piratical Dane,
Have marched where he joyously ranged, and peopled this desolate plain.
Dynasties, peoples, and laws have waxed, ruled, and faded, and gone,
But still spreads his primitive home, sombre, unfertile, and lone.

Here toiled the wallowing coach, where the highway goes winding away:
Here the highwayman lurked in the shadow, impatiently waiting his prey:

There, where the turbulent river, unbridged, rolled fiercely in spate,
The wayfarer, seeking the deep-flooded ford, met a watery fate.

I can show you the suicide's grave, where bracken and bryony twine,
By the four cross-roads on the heath, where the breath of the breeze is like wine;
And bees and butterflies flit in the sun, and life is joyous and sweet,
And takes no care for the tragedy there, where the suicide sleeps at your feet.

Dwellers in village and town, each contribute their tale to the store,
Peasants of valley and down, and fishers by river and shore.
Thus I tell you the Tale of the Road, told with a laugh or a sigh;
Sought with a zest, told with a jest, wrought with a tear in the eye.

CHARLES G. HARPER.

PETERSHAM,
SURREY,
February, 1904.

THE ROAD TO NEWMARKET, THETFORD, NORWICH, AND CROMER.

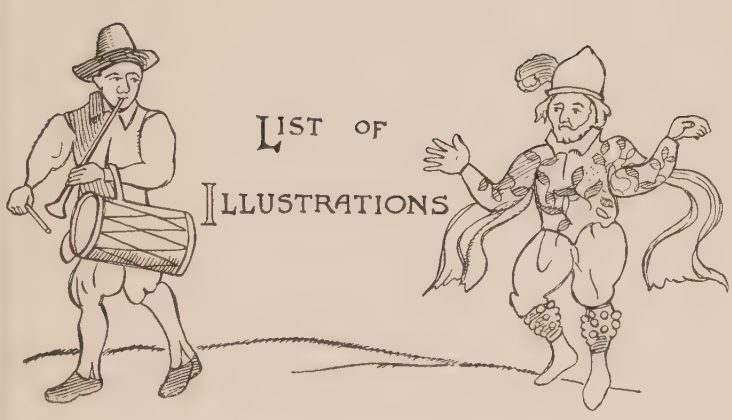
	MILES
London (General Post Office) to—	
Shoreditch Church	1½
Cambridge Heath	2½
Hackney Church	3½
Lower Clapton	4
Lea Bridge	5½
(Cross River Lea.)	
Whip's Cross	6¾
Snaresbrook ("The Eagle")	8
Woodford (St. Mary's Church)	9
Woodford Green	9¾
Woodford Wells ("Horse and Well" Inn)	10¼
Buckhurst Hill ("Bald-faced Stag")	11
Loughton	13
Wake Arms	15
Epping	18
Thornwood Common	20¼
Potter Street	22½
Harlow	24½
(Cross River Stort: Stort Navigation, Harlow Wharf.)	
Sawbridgeworth	26¾
Spelbrook	28½
Thorley Street	29½
(Cross River Stort.)	
Hockerill, Bishop Stortford	30½
Stansted Mountfitchet	33½
Ugley	35½

Quendon	36½
Newport	39
(Cross Wicken Water.)	
Uttlesford Bridge, Audley End	40¼
(On right, Saffron Walden, 1½ mile ; on left, ½ mile, Wendens Ambo.)	
Littlebury	42¼
Little Chesterford	43¾
(Cross River Cam.)	
Great Chesterford	44½
Stump Cross	45¼
Pampisford Station, Bourn Bridge	48½
(Cross Bourn Stream, or Linton River.)	
Six Mile Bottom	54½
(Level Crossing, Six Mile Bottom Station.)	
Devil's Ditch	58½
Newmarket (Clock Tower)	60½
"Red Lodge" Inn	65½
(Cross River Kennet.)	
Barton Mills	69¾
(Cross River Lark, Mildenhall, on left, 1 mile.)	
Elveden	77
Thetford	80¾
(Cross Rivers Little Ouse and Thet.)	
Larling Level Crossing	85¾
Larlingford	88¾
(Cross River Thet.)	
Attleborough	94¾
Morley St. Peter Post Office	97
Wymondham	100¾
Hethersett	104¼
Cringleford	106¾
(Cross River Yare.)	

Eaton	107¼
Norwich (Market Place)	109¾
(Cross River Wensum.)	
Upper Hellesdon	110½
Mile Cross	111
Horsham St. Faith	114¼
Newton St. Faith	115½
Stratton Strawless	117½
Hevingham	118
Marsham	120
Aylsham (Market Place)	121½
(Cross River Bure.)	
Ingworth	123½
Erpingham	125½
Hanworth Corner	126¾
Roughton	128½
Crossdale Street	131
Cromer	132

To Thetford, through Bury St. Edmunds.

Newmarket (Clock Tower)	61¾
Kentford	66
(Cross River Kennet.)	
Higham Station	68½
Saxham White Horse	71½
Risby	73
Bury St. Edmunds	75½
Fornham St. Martin	77½
Ingham	79¾
Seven Hills	81¾
Barnham	85½
Thetford	87¾



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I

THE road to Newmarket, Thetford, Norwich, and Cromer is 132 miles in length, if you go direct from the old starting-points, Shoreditch or Whitechapel churches. If, on the other hand, you elect to follow the route of the old Thetford and Norwich Mail, which turned off just outside Newmarket from the direct road through Barton Mills, and went instead by Bury St. Edmunds, it is exactly seven miles longer to Thetford and all places beyond.

There are few roads so wild and desolate, and no other main road so lonely, in the southern half of this country. There are even those who describe it as "dreary," but that is simply a description due to extrinsic circumstances. Beyond question, however, it must needs have been a terrible road in the old coaching days, and every one who had a choice of routes to Norwich did most emphatically and determinedly elect to journey by way of that more populated line of country leading through Chelmsford, Colchester, and Ipswich.

Taken nowadays, however, without the harassing drawbacks of rain or snow, or without head-winds to make the cyclist's progression a misery, it is a road of weirdly interesting scenery. It is not recommended for night-riding to the solitary rider of impressionable nature, for its general aloofness from the haunts of man, and that concentrated spell of sixteen miles of stark solitudes between Great Chesterford and Newmarket, where you have the bare chalk downs all to yourself, are apt to give all such as he that unpleasant sensation popularly called "the creeps." By day, however, these things lose their uncanny effect while they keep their interest.

There are in all rather more than fifty miles of chalk downs and furzy heaths along this road, and they are all the hither side of Norwich. You bid good-bye to the chalk downs when once Newmarket is gained, and then reach the still wild, but kindlier, country of the sandy heaths.

Cromer was not within the scheme of the London coach-proprietors' activities in the days of the road. It was scarce more than a fishing village, and the traveller who wished to reach it merely booked to Norwich, and from thence found a local coach to carry him forward. To Norwich by this route it is exactly two miles shorter than by way of Colchester and Ipswich. Let us see how public needs were studied in those old days by proprietors of stage-coach and mail.

II

The Newmarket and Thetford route was not a favourite one with the earliest coachmasters. Its lengthy stretches of unpopulated country rendered it a poor speculation, and the exceptional dangers to be apprehended from highwaymen kept it unpopular with travellers. The Chelmsford, Colchester, and Ipswich route on to Norwich was always the favourite with travellers bound so far, and on that road we have details of coaching so early as 1696. Here, however, although there were early conveyances, we only set foot upon sure historic ground in 1769, when a coach set out from the "Bull," Bishopsgate, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 7 a.m., and conveyed passengers to Norwich at £1 2*s.* each.

In that same year a "Flying Machine," in one day, is found going from the "Swan with Two Necks" on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays in summer at 12 o'clock noon. For this express speed of Norwich in one day the fare was somewhat higher; £1 8*s.* was the price put upon travelling by the "Flying Machine"; but in winter, when it set forth on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, at the unearthly hour of 5 a.m., the price was 3*s.* lower.

In 1782 a Diligence went three times a week, at 10 p.m., from the "White Horse," Fetter Lane; as also did a "Post Coach," at 10 p.m., from the "Swan with Two Necks," the "Machine" at mid-

night, and "a coach," name and description not specified, from the "Bull," Bishopsgate Street, at 10 p.m. There were thus at this time four coaches to Norwich. In 1784 the "Machine" disappears from the coach-lists of that useful old publication, the *Shopkeepers' Assistant*, and in its stead appears for the first time the "Expedition" coach. This new-comer started thrice a week—Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays—from the "Bull," Bishopsgate Street, at the hour of 9 p.m. Evidently there were stout hearts on this route in those times, to travel thus through the terrors of the darkling roads.

In 1788 the "Expedition" is found starting one hour earlier: in 1790, another two hours. In 1798 it set out from the "White Horse," Fetter Lane, so early as 3.45 p.m., and had begun to go every day. Calling on the way at its original starting-point, the "Bull," it left that house at 4 p.m., and continued on its way without further interruption.

What the "Expedition" was like at this period we may judge from the very valuable evidence of the accompanying illustration, drawn in *facsimile* from a contemporary painting by Cordery. It was one of the singular freaks that had then a limited vogue, and is a "double-bodied" coach, designed to suit the British taste for seclusion. How the passengers in the hinder body entered or left the coach is not readily seen, unless we may suppose that the artist was guilty of a technical mistake, and brought the hind wheels too far forward. The

THE NORWICH STAGE, ABOUT 1790.

From a painting by an artist unknown.

only alternative is to presume a communication between fore and hind bodies.

This illustration, so deeply interesting to students of coaching history, was evidently, as the long inscription underneath suggests, designed in the first instance as a pictorial advertisement, and doubtless hung in the booking-office of the coach at the "Bull" in Bishopsgate Street. That quaintly-mispelled programme shows its speed, inclusive of stops for changing and supper, to have been six miles an hour.

The difficulties in the way of the coaching historian are gravely increased by the omissions and inaccuracies that plentifully stud the reference books of the past. Thus, although the *Shopkeepers' Assistant* omits all notice of the "Expedition" after 1801, we cannot admit it to have been discontinued, for it is referred to in a Norwich paper of 1816, in which we learn that it left Norwich at 3 p.m. and arrived at London at 9 a.m., a performance slower by half an hour than that of eighteen years earlier. From this notice we also learn the fares, which were 35*s.* for insides and 20*s.* out.

In 1821 it left London at 5.30 p.m., and in 1823 at 5 p.m. We have no record of its appearance at this time, but the double-bodied coach had probably by then been replaced by one of ordinary build. The old-established concern seems, however, to have lost some of its popularity, for on April 10th, the following year, 1824, the proprietors discontinued it, and started the "Magnet"—so

named, probably, because they conceived such a title would have great powers of attraction. If the mere name could not have brought much extra custom, at least the improved speed was calculated to do so. The year 1824 was the opening of the era of fast coaches all over the country, and the "Magnet" was advertised to run from the "White Swan" and "Rampant Horse," Norwich, at 4 p.m., and arrive at London 7 a.m. These figures give a journey of fifteen hours, a considerable improvement upon the performances of the old "Expedition," but the return journey was one hour better. Leaving the "Bull," Bishopsgate Street, at 7 p.m., the coach was at Norwich by 9 o'clock the next morning.

The "Magnet," unfortunately, was no sooner started than it met with a mishap. On the midnight of May 15th the up coach, crossing the bridge over the Cam at Great Chesterford, about midnight, ran into a swamp, and the passengers who did not wish to drown had to climb on to the roof and remain there, while the water flowed through the windows. Eventually the coach was dragged out by cart-horses. The swamp is still there, beside the road.

Meanwhile, the down coach came along, and had only just crossed the bridge when the arch, forced out by the swollen state of the river, burst, with a tremendous crash. Another coach, approaching, received warning from the guard of the "Magnet" swinging his lantern. Had it not been for his timely act, a very grave

THE "EXPEDITION," NEWMARKET AND NORWICH STAGE, ABOUT 1798. *From the painting by Cordery.*

This was made, apparently, as an advertisement of the coach.

disaster must have happened, and the passengers of the coach very properly set afoot a subscription for him.

Meanwhile the Royal Mail was going every week-day night at 7 p.m. from the "Golden Cross," Charing Cross, and from the "Flower Pot," Bishopsgate Street, an hour later. It ran to the "King's Head," Norwich, and went by Bury St. Edmunds, continuing that route until January 6th, 1846, when—the last of the coaches on this road—it ceased to be.

In 1821 the "Times" day coach left the "Blue Boar," Whitechapel, at 5.45 every morning, going by Bury; the "Telegraph" day coach, by Barton Mills and Elveden, started from the "Cross Keys," Wood Street, at 6.45 a.m., and got to Norwich in 13 hours; a coach from the "Bull," Bishopsgate Street, travelling by Bury, left at 7 a.m.; from the "White Horse," Fetter Lane, a "Light Post" coach set out, by Barton Mills and Elveden, at 5.30 p.m., arriving at the "White Swan," Norwich, in 15½ hours, at 9 a.m.; and a coach by the same route from the "Golden Cross," Charing Cross, at 6.30 a.m., arriving at 8 p.m.

In addition to these were the so-called "single" coaches: *i.e.*, those not running a down and an up coach, but going down one day and returning the next. These were the conveyance from the "Bull," Bishopsgate Street, at 5.30 a.m., on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, by Barton Mills and Elveden,

reaching the "White Swan," Norwich, in $12\frac{1}{2}$ hours (the best performance of all); and the "Norwich Safety," by Bury, on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, from the "Bull and Mouth" at 7.30 p.m.; a very slow, as well as a self-styled "safe" coach, for it only reached Norwich at 11 a.m.; thus lagging $15\frac{1}{2}$ hours on the road.

The "Phenomenon," or "Phenomena," as it was variously styled, left the "Boar and Castle," 6, Oxford Street, where the Oxford Music Hall now stands, at 5.30 a.m., and the "Bull," Whitechapel, at 6.30, and went a route of its own, by Chelmsford, Braintree, Sible and Castle Hedingham, Sudbury, Bury, and Scole, to Norwich. To Bury, especially, went three coaches, two of them daily, and one thrice a week.

The Norwich Mail, by Newmarket and Bury, had in the meanwhile been abandoned by Benjamin Worthy Horne, of the "Golden Cross," and had been taken over by Robert Nelson, of the "Belle Sauvage." It was the only mail he had. He horsed it as far as Hockerill, and it is eminently unlikely that he and his partners down the road did much more than make both ends meet. For Post Office purposes the Mail was bound to go by Bury, which involved seven miles more than by the direct route, and it had to contend with the competition of the "Telegraph" day coach, going direct, and at an hour more convenient for travellers. So this Mail never loaded well, and coachmasters were

not eager to contract for running it. The Post Office, accustomed to pay the quite small amounts of 2*d.* and 3*d.* a mile, paid 8*d.*, and then 9*d.*, per mile for this, to induce any one to work it at all, and it was contemplated to entrust the mail-bags to stage-coaches along this route, when the railway came and cut off stage and mail alike.

This Norwich Mail was not without its adventures. It was nearly wrecked in the early morning of June 15th, 1817, when close to Newmarket, by a plough and harrow, placed in the middle of the road by some unknown scoundrels. The horses were pitifully injured. A year or so later it came into collision on the Heath with a waggon laden with straw. A lamp was broken by the force of the impact, and straw and waggon set ablaze and destroyed.

Beside the coaches, there were many vans and waggons plying along the road, and some comparatively short-distance coaches. Thus there was the "Old Stortford" coach, daily, between London and Bishop's Stortford, and the Saffron Walden coach, twice daily, from the "Bull," Whitechapel; together with the Saffron Walden "Telegraph," from the "Belle Sauvage," on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. "Gilbey & Co." had a coach plying the twelve miles between Bishop's Stortford and Saffron Walden, twice daily. Coaching between London and Bishop's Stortford ended when the "Northern and Eastern Railway"—long since amalgamated

with the Great Eastern—was opened to that point, in 1841. All coaches between London and Norwich ceased to run early in 1846.

III

Although the road to Newmarket lay, as we have seen, chiefly through Epping, Chesterford, and Bishop's Stortford from the earliest days of coaching, this route was, in earlier times of travel, but one of several. A favourite way was along the Old North Road, through Enfield, Ware, Puckeridge, and Royston, whence wayfarers might branch off to the right, by way of Whittlesford and Pampisford, or might go through Melbourn, Harston, and Cambridge. Travellers were shy of venturing into the glades of Epping Forest, infested beyond the ordinary run with dangerous characters, and rather braved the rigours of the open downs than encounter the terrors of the shrouded woodlands. James I., with his passion for the chase and his hunting-palace at Royston, early established a fox-hunting lodge at Newmarket, and had, with his magnificent palace of Theobalds, at Cheshunt, a series of reasons for travelling this route. The road was bad, of course, in those times: they all were. The only difference in them was that when all were bad others were merely

worse. But when any particular road became a kingly route, attempts were made to improve it, and thus we read that so early as 1609 one Thomas Norton, "way-maker" to his Majesty, was at work on the problem of repairing "the highewayes leadinge to and from the Citty of London to the towns of Royston and Newmarkett, for his Ma^ties^ better passage in goeing and cominge to his recreations in those parts." No silly nonsense, you will observe, about public benefit, nor anything in the way of excusing the thing on the ground of the King's business demanding it. His Majesty's amusements, we are frankly allowed to see, were at stake, and that was reason sufficient.

Mr. Thomas Norton was not, after all, paid very much for his services. In 1609 he received £29 10*s.*, and a pittance continued afterwards to be doled out to him.

The way to Newmarket, however, still continued to be a matter of individual taste and fancy. When James was visited there in February, 1615, by Mr. Secretary Winwood on State business, he journeyed by Epping, Chesterford, and Bishop's Stortford, returning the same way. He travelled with a wondrous rapidity, too, when we consider what travelling then was; and although he *did* complain of "a sore journey, as the wayes are," did actually succeed in returning to London in one day, by dint of having on his way down made arrangements for coaches to be "laid for him" at three several places. Two years later

the Swedish Ambassador travelled to Newmarket to pay his respects to the King. He went by Royston in two days, sleeping at Puckeridge the first night, and returned by Cambridge, Newport (where he stayed the night), and Waltham.

In 1632 the surveyor of highways is found solemnly adjuring the parishes and the roadside landowners to perform the duties laid upon them by the General Highway Act of 1555, and to repair the "noyous" ways by which Charles I. was proposing to travel to Royston and Newmarket. The malt traffic, which thirty years later had grown so heavy on this road that toll-gates became necessary to keep it in repair, appears already to have been a great feature, for the surveyor urged the restriction on this occasion of the number of malt-carts, and prohibited waggons drawn by more than five horses.

We gain from the pages of Samuel Pepys a glimpse of what these royal journeys were like in the time of Charles II. When you have read it you will conclude that even a modern penny tramway ride has more majesty, and certainly seems to be safer. He notes in his diary, under March 8th, 1669, that he went "to White Hall, from whence the King and the Duke of York went, by three in the morning and had the misfortune to be overset with the Duke of York, the Duke of Monmouth, and the Prince (Prince Rupert) at the King's Gate in Holborne, and the King all dirty, but no hurt. How it came to pass, I know not, but only it was darke, and the

torches did not, they say, light the coach as they should do."

It would puzzle most Londoners in these days to tell where the King's Gate was situated. The last landmark that stood for it was swept away in 1902, when the east side of Southampton Row was demolished, and with it the narrow thoroughfare of Kingsgate Street, in the rear, to make way for the new street from Holborn to the Strand. The student of Dickens will recollect that Mrs. Gamp lived in Kingsgate Street: "which her name is well-beknown is S. Gamp, Midwife, Kingsgate Street, High Holborn"; but in the time of James I. and the Stuart kings it was a narrow, and it would also seem, by Pepys' account, a muddy, lane leading from the pleasant country road of Holborn to another and longer lane called then as now, when it is a lane no more, "Theobalds Road." The lane was provided with a barred gate, and was used exclusively by the King and a few privileged others on the way to Theobalds Palace and Newmarket.

The post went in those times from London to Newmarket by way of Shoreditch, Kingsland, Waltham, Ware, Royston, and Cambridge. In 1660 Cosmo III., Grand Duke of Tuscany, went by Epping. Sleeping at Bishop's Stortford overnight, he was at Newmarket next day. In October the following year Evelyn travelled by Epping, with six horses, changing three times only in the sixty-one miles—at Epping, Bishop's Stortford, and Chesterford.

Ogilby in 1675, when the first edition of his *Britannia* was published, mapped out the road to Newmarket as part of the Old North Road as far as Puckeridge, and thence took it to Barley, Whittlesford, and Pampisford; yet Charles II. is not found travelling that way. He occasionally went by Epping, but chiefly through Waltham Cross and Hoddesdon, and thence by an obscure route past the Rye House, Hunsdon Street, Widford, Much Hadham, Hadham Ford, Patmore Heath, Stocking Pelham, Berden, Rickling Church End, and into Newport by a lane still known locally as "London Lane." A house at Newport now known as "Nell Gwynne's House," and once the "Horns" inn, was at that time a halting-place often used by Nell, the Duke of York, the Duke of Buckingham, and the Earl of Rochester on their way to or from Newmarket races.

The very remoteness and obscurity of this route gave the conspirators of the Rye House Plot of 1683 their opportunity. Those plotters were not the thorough-paced scoundrels historians would have us believe, but men who, with a passionate hatred of Popish doctrines, and with a keen recollection of the approximation to civil and religious liberty enjoyed under the Commonwealth of more than twenty years earlier, viewed the growing absolutism of Charles's rule and the advances of Popery with fear and rage. The King as a man, with his romantic story, his airy wit, his genial cynicism and lack of affectation, has

always commanded affection, but as a ruler deserved hatred and contempt. The original conspiracy was comparatively harmless, and cherished the idea of a constitutional revolution. With dreamy eyes fixed upon the ideal of a Utopian Republic, it included such visionaries as Algernon Sidney, Lord William Russell, the Earls of Essex and Shaftesbury, John Hampden (grandson of the patriot), and Lord Howard of Escrick.

But an inner circle of less distinguished but more desperate men formed within this movement had other, and secret, designs. It was their intention to place the Protestant Duke of Monmouth, Charles's natural son, upon the throne, and, as a preliminary, to "remove" the King. "No one would kill me to make you king," Charles had once said to his brother James, Duke of York; but the intention of the Rye House conspirators was to assassinate both. These physical-force men worked long and silently, without the knowledge of the others. At their head was one Rumbold, a maltster, a colonel in Cromwell's army, and with him Walcot, a brother officer in those old times. Rumbold was the occupier of a farm, the Rye House, an ancient building whose walls ranged with the narrow lane, miscalled a road, which ran—and still runs, as a lane—along the sloppy valley of the river Lea. The house had been built by a certain Andrew Ogard, who in the reign of Henry VI. had been licensed to construct a fortified dwelling here. The beautiful

Gatehouse, in red brick, with picturesquely twisted chimneys and a fine oriel window, yet remains.

The best description of the place as it was at that time is the following, extracted from the trial of the conspirators in 1683 :—

"The Rye House in Hertfordshire, about eighteen miles from London, is so called from the 'Rye,' a meadow near it. Just under it there is a bye-road from Bishop's Strafford to Hoddesden, which was constantly used by the King when he went to or from Newmarket; the great road winding much about on the right hand, by Stanstead. The House is an old strong building and stands alone, encompassed with a moat, and towards the garden has high walls, so that twenty men might easily defend it for some time against five hundred. From a high tower in the House all that go or come may be seen both ways, for nearly a mile's distance. As you come from Newmarket towards London, when you are near the House, you pass the meadow over a narrow causeway, at the end of which is a toll-gate, which having entered, you go through a yard and a little field, and at the end of that, through another gate, you pass into a narrow lane, where two coaches at that time could not go abreast. This narrow passage had on the left hand a thick hedge and a ditch, and on the right a long range of buildings used for corn-chambers and stables, with several doors and windows looking into the road, and before it a pale, which then made the passage so

RYE HOUSE.

narrow, but is since removed. When you are past this long building, you go by the moat and the garden wall, that is very strong, and has divers holes in it, through which a great many men might shoot. Along by the moat and wall, the road continues to the Ware River, which runs about twenty or thirty yards from the moat, and is to be past by a bridge. A small distance from thence, another bridge is to be past, over the New River. In both which passes a few men may oppose great numbers. In the outer court-yard, which is behind the long building, a considerable body of horse and foot might be drawn up, unperceived from the road; whence they might easily issue out at the same time into each end of the narrow lane, which was also to be stopt by overturning a cart."

Here the conspirators, assembled to the number of fifty, hoped to make short work of the Royal brothers, in the darkness of night and the confusion of the sudden stoppage, and would in all probability have been successful had it not been for the fire of March 22nd, which burnt half the town of Newmarket and put the Court there to such inconvenience that the King hurriedly decided to return to London some days before he was expected back. Rumbold and his men were unprepared and the plot miscarried. The unforeseen had happened, and all their extensive armament was useless. We must spare a little admiration for the thoroughness of their equipment, which included six blunderbusses,

twenty muskets, and between twenty and thirty pairs of pistols. These deadly articles were afterwards found to be referred to in the conspirators' correspondence under the innocent pseudonyms of quills, goosequills, and crowquills. Powder was "ink," and bullets "sand."

That inevitable feature of every plot, the informer, was soon in evidence, and the greater number of the conspirators, constitutional and otherwise, were seized. After an unfair trial, Sidney and Russell, among the constitutionalists, were executed; Lord Howard of Escrick had turned evidence and so escaped punishment, the Earl of Essex committed suicide in prison, Shaftesbury had prudently, at an early stage, fled abroad, and Hampden was fined £44,000. The physical force men were hanged. Rumbold escaped for awhile to Holland, but incautiously joined a later insurrection under the Duke of Argyle in the north, and was wounded and taken prisoner at the same time as his leader. It was the desire of the Government that, as one of the principals of the plot, he should be brought to England for execution, but it was feared that he would not survive the journey, and he was executed, under circumstances of revolting barbarity, at Edinburgh, being hoisted up by a pulley and hanged awhile, and then, still alive, let down. his heart torn out and carried on the point of a bayonet by the hangman.

Bishop Sprat, in his "True Account of the Horrid Conspiracy," says Rumbold made a state-

ment that he and some of his friends had resolved to cut off the King and his brother on their way to or from Newmarket, more than ten years earlier, and had lain some time in ambush for that purpose: "but his Majesty and his Royal Brother went the other way through the Forest; which, as the Wretch himself could not but observe, they have seldom or never done, before or since."

We can find much subject for speculation in considering what would have happened had the Rye House Plot been successful and the King and his brother slain under the fire of Rumbold's battery. There would still have been a James II.; not the sour bigot who bore that title, but James, Duke of Monmouth. And there would certainly have been no William III., and no Georges, and—but those historic Might Have Beens, how they can run away with the imagination, to be sure!

As for the Rye House; at the beginning of the nineteenth century it had become a workhouse, and so continued until 1840, when, under the Poor Law Amendment Act, it became necessary to provide less make-shift accommodation. To-day it is the resort of beanfeasters innumerable, who are set down at the Rye House station, and guzzle and swill at the gimcrack Rye House inn, where the Great Bed of Ware is the staple attraction; or take tea in the earwiggy arbours of the genuine Rye House, where there is a "Barons' Hall" calculated to astonish any baron

who might chance to come back from the wrack of centuries gone. There is, too, a would-be fearsome "dungeon" affair, with stalactites dependent from the roof, and looking, superficially, at least a thousand years old; but a confidential chat over a glass of ale with an informing stranger reveals the man who made them, and *he* is not yet even a centenarian.

IV

It behoves us now, after tracing this truly Royal route, to return and plod the plebeian path. Let us start from whence the road of old was measured, from busy Shoreditch.

Here the ordinary traffic of London streets is complicated by that of the heavy railway vans and trollies to and from the great neighbouring goods station of Bishopsgate, and the din and confusion are intensified by the stone setts that here have not been replaced by wood paving.

Upon all this maze of traffic the church of St. Leonard's, Shoreditch, looks down with an eighteenth-century gravity. It is not old, as churches go, and looks, like all its fellows in the classic Renaissance of a hundred and fifty years ago, something alien and inhospitable. It marks the extension of London at that time, past the old bounds of Bishopsgate, Norton Folgate—whose name is supposed to be a corruption of Norton

'Fore the-gate, outside the City—and the ancient "Sordig," "Sorditch," or "Shordych," an open sewer outside the walls. Popular legend, in this particular instance at fault, still ascribes the name to Jane Shore, the fallen favourite of Edward VI., who, in the words of a doleful old ballad, is said to have ended here :—

> Thus, weary of my life at length,
> I yielded up my vital strength
> Within a ditch of loathsome scent,
> Where carrion dogs did much frequent.
>
> The which now since my dying day
> Is Shoreditch call'd, as authors say;
> Which is a witness of my sin
> For being concubine to a king.

By the church the road turns acutely to the right, along the Hackney Road, to Mare Street and Cambridge Heath, where, at the junction of the roads, the first turnpike from London stood.

The 'Ackney Road—for it is thus that the inhabitants know it—is a broad artery athwart those wilds of Bethnal Green and Haggerston, where the Hooligans live—those sprightly hobbledehoys who find life all too dull and tame, and so spice it with the uncivilised frays that keep the police so actively employed. Boot and buckled strap play their part in the street-war between Hooligan and Hooligan, a warfare varied by unprovoked assaults upon unoffending citizens, who find themselves unexpectedly floored and their ears and noses being savaged off by the Hooligan teeth.

It is no new thoroughfare, the Hackney Road, and is merely the modern development of the country lane that once upon a time led into the fields immediately after Shoreditch church was passed. It follows exactly the same route as when Hackney was a pleasant country village, when Cambridge Heath really was a heath, and when the sheep grazed in the meadows of Hoxton. But it was a dangerous as well as a pretty road in those times, the scene during the long series of years between 1718 and 1756 of so many robberies and murders that the village residents of Hackney, weary of being clubbed separately, at last clubbed together and offered handsome rewards for the arrest of any of those footpads and highwaymen who rendered it unsafe to stir abroad. That it was not in 1732 a desirable place for an evening stroll may readily be gathered from the adventures that befell a worthy tradesman who, returning to London from Hackney about six o'clock in the evening, was set upon by two fellows, who robbed him of his money and pocket-book. He pleaded earnestly for the book to be restored to him, and happening to recognise one of the rogues, said, "Honest friend, one good turn deserves another. I was one of the jurymen who took compassion upon you last sessions at the Old Bailey, when you were tried for robbery and acquitted, although we all believed you to be guilty."

To this the thief ungratefully replied, "Curse your eyes, you son of a bitch, learn to do justice another time and be damned"; and, knocking

their unfortunate victim backwards into a slimy ditch, they both decamped.

The papers of the time, reporting this little incident, seem astonished at the violence of the language, but we moderns feel inclined to ask, "Is that all?" It is mildness itself compared with the foul language, the damning and cursing that may be heard to-day, without any provocation, at every street-corner.

But if the foodpads who infested the Hackney Road were the merest tyros in swearing, they seem to have been proficients in assassination, for many bodies, shot and stabbed, were continually found beside the road, and it was not until about 1756 that any degree of safety could be obtained. On January 15th, in that year, the way between Shoreditch and Hackney was lighted with lamps for the first time, and a military guard, with muskets loaded and bayonets fixed, patrolled the distance.

The original "pleasant village" of Hackney, thought to have derived from "Hacon's Ey," the island settlement of some Danish landowner on the wide-spreading waters of the river Lea, has disappeared under many millions of tons of brick and stone. Of this Hacon we know nothing, and his very existence is deduced, perhaps wrongly, from the place-name. The same person is perhaps commemorated in the name of that City church, St. Nicholas Acon, in Lombard Street, whose origin is unknown. Stow tells us it was sometimes written Hacon, "for so I have read it in records";

and there was ever much uncertainty in words beginning with A or H.

Hackney is not a name of pleasant savour. The word is associated with everything trite, threadbare, flat, stale, and unprofitable. Hackneyed subjects, hackney authors, hackney horses, and hackney carriages occur at once to the mind; but we must do Hackney the justice to acknowledge that they have no connection with the place, and that those who long ago sought to prove such a connection were utterly wrong. "The village," says one, "being anciently celebrated for numerous seats of the nobility and gentry, people of all kinds resorted to it from the City, and so great a number of horses were daily hired that they became known as Hackney horses. Hence the term spread to public conveyances." Unfortunately for so neat and four-square an origin, the word "haquenée," meaning a slow-paced nag, is as old as Chaucer, whose typical young gentleman had a hackeney. This, however, was not at all in the nature of a cab-horse, for we are told in the next line, he "loved wel to have a horse of prise."

It is singular, in view of this mistaken idea of derivation, that the chief street of Hackney should be Mare Street, but any attempt to connect that name with the supposed origin of Hackney would only result in a mare's nest for the too-ingenious. That street, originally "Meare" Street, had nothing to do with horses. Its name probably marked the line of some forgotten boundary.

V

The place is now a busy suburb, like every other in most respects, and remarkable only for the extraordinary number and variety of its places of worship. Every brand of religion is represented here, but all that remains of the old parish church is the venerable mediæval tower, hard by where the North London Railway crosses over the road. The body of the old building was demolished, on the plea that it was dangerous, in 1798: really, the times were out of sympathy with Gothic architecture, and any excuse was made to serve for the building of the hideous, nondescript pagan church that now stands close at hand. The old tower keeps watch and ward, beside the thronged modern street, over that great graveyard where the dead of 900 years lie, and pious hands, with the first year of the present century, have erected a tall Celtic cross of Kilkenny marble, in memory of "all who died in faith."

It is a hard-working population that lives at Hackney, whose by-streets and alleys are very grey and mean; but somewhere in this very neighbourhood the hero of Mr. Gus Elen's song had his "pretty little garden." That was supposed to be a comic song, but it was one with a certain amount of pathos in it. It is not a pathos discernible by the builder, who finds his greatest satisfaction in pushing London still further out into the country, but it is there all the same. That Hackney hero

was as fond of his backyard garden and of his somewhat problematical neighbourhood to the country as many an owner of vast estates, and took a greater personal delight in them. Thus went the refrain to one of the verses :—

It was a very pretty little garden,
And Epping from the 'ousetops might be seen,
With the aid of op'ra-glasses you could see to 'Ackney Marshes,
If it wasn't for the 'ouses in between.

Ay ! if it wasn't for the houses in between : there's the tragedy of it ! Do you not perceive the broad basis of pathos beneath the fun : that pitiful craving of the natural man for the country, and his heart-sickness of the pavements, while the fresh, green countryside is practically so remote, and is growing still more distant ?

Lower Clapton Road leads out of Hackney, and in half a mile brings us, past the site of Lower Clapton toll-gate, to the beginning of the Lea Bridge Road, one of the very few routes by which London and the Essex suburbs can join hands, across the river Lea and its marshy fringes.

A favourite piece of advice of the late Lord Salisbury to politicians weak at the knees with apprehension of Russia's advance in Asia was, "Consult large maps." We need not stop to consider how far that overrated statesman, in consulting maps *too* large, was the victim of his own cynical advice ; but we may apply it, frankly and without any cynical meaning, here. Thus, referring to a large map of London and its environs,

you will soon perceive this restricted choice of roads between London and Essex. The Lea and the broad marshes of West Ham, Stratford, Hackney, Leyton, Walthamstow, and Tottenham have always offered great obstacles to road-makers, and have stemmed the tide of London's expansion in this direction until quite recent years. Large maps of the London districts, scored with a dark tint of streets, still show a long strip of white, indicating ground still unbuilt upon, along the Lea valley from Blackwall to Edmonton, where it merges into the country, and in all those ten miles there are but three high roads leading from Middlesex into Essex. One is that which conducts from Poplar to Plaistow, and so on to Barking and Southend; another is the Norwich Road, from Bow to Stratford and on to Norwich by way of Chelmsford and Colchester; the third is our present route, through Clapton to the crossing of the Lea at Lea Bridge Road. Other crossings are few, without exception obscure and bad, and generally lead over roadways composed of clinkers, scrap-iron, broken bottles, and tin-clippings to morasses, or to the gates of soap factories, bone manure works, sewage-beds, and other useful but objectionable institutions of like nature. The Lea Bridge Road itself, although broad and straight and leading on to the country, has perhaps the worst surface of any road in or near London, not excepting even that monumentally bad roadway, the Victoria Embankment. Before 1757, when the predecessor of the present Lea Bridge was built

and a roadway made, to open up communication between Middlesex, Epping Forest, and the Essex villages, the Lea was spanned only by an ancient and narrow bridge, and the roads leading up to it were impossible for wheeled traffic. At that period the best way to reach the Forest was by Stratford, West Ham, and Leytonstone, and a road through Hackney and Clapton is shown in maps so late as 1756 leading to the "World's End," which was apparently the significant name of the track that then wandered across the marshes to the Lea.

The present line of the Lea Bridge Road owes its existence to the Lea Bridge Turnpike Road Act of 1756, and is found duly set out on Rocque's map of 1763, where it is continued on to Walthamstow as "Butterfield's Lane"; but the first bridge was not built until 1772. By that time the coaches had begun to run—or, as the advertisement of the time phrased it, to "set forth"—but they, and the traffic to Newmarket generally, went the Stratford and West Ham route until the early '20's.

VI

The Lea Bridge Road, although a broad and direct thoroughfare, makes a bad beginning, and branches off narrowly and in an obscure manner from the wide Lower Clapton Road. The present bridge was built in 1821. The road itself is a

singular combination of picturesqueness and sordid vulgarity. Badly founded on the marshes that stretch, water-logged, on either side of the river Lea, its two miles' length of roadway is full of ridges and depressions that no mere surface repairs will ever remedy, and nothing less than reconstruction from its foundations will ever cure the unequal subsidences of what should be the finest highway out of London into Essex.

The Lea Bridge Road is in some ways an exceptional thoroughfare. Although of urban character, it is largely a road without houses; for the marshy fields through which it runs, elevated in the manner of a causeway, have kept the builder at a wholesome distance, and from the Lea Bridge and other points one looks over wide level tracts of green meadows to where Upper Clapton, and Stamford Hill beyond, not unpicturesquely crown the heights with villa roofs and church spires, and seem with a superior air of riches and high-class villadom to look down across the valley of the Lea on to the thronged wage-earning populations of clerkly and artizan Walthamstow. You think, as you gaze from this midway vantage-ground and consider these things, of the "great gulf" set between Lazarus and Dives—with the essential difference that here, at any rate, Dives had the advantage.

A halt on the Lea Bridge Road is certainly stimulating to the imagination. On any summer midday that does not happen to be a Saturday, a Sunday, or a Bank Holiday, the contemplative

man has it all to himself. Lazarus, from Walthamstow, in his many thousands of clerks and workmen, has departed, long ago, for the counting-houses and workshops of the city; and Dives from Clapton has, in more leisurely fashion, followed them to his office, or meeting of directors. The dirty, out-of-date tramcars that ply along the road, and seem never to be washed, are no longer crowded, and the traffic consists chiefly of costermongers' carts and barrows, on their way to their daily house-to-house calls in the countless streets of that sprawling Walthamstow and that loose-limbed Leyton. The marshes, the distant frontier of banked-up houses, and even the long railway viaducts that stretch like monstrous centipedes across the levels, look interesting, and the water-loving willows and graceful clumps of the bushy poplar are not wanting to add something of beauty to the scene. There is, too, if you do but choose to look for it, a kind of skulking romance to be found on the Essex side of the Lea, where the rustic cottages come down to the fringe of the marsh; their faces away from, their back gardens towards it. Quite humble cottages, roofed with the old red pantiles, and sometimes weatherboarded; the crazy wooden palings of their gardens patched and mended with the oddest timber salvage, from the unnecessary sturdiness of an odd post from a four-poster bedstead, to the blue-painted staves of petroleum barrels and wrecked wheels of bygone conveyances. The posts of clothes-lines are per-

manent features of these gardens, and on good "drying days" the most intimate articles of underwear flaunt a defiant challenge across the valley to the prim susceptibilities of Upper Clapton and Stamford Hill—which put their washing out. It is not, however, in the underlinen and the stockings, very darny and limp, and lacking the interest of a shapely leg, that the skulking romance, already alluded to, lies. No, not at all: in fact, otherwise. You may perceive it in the varying lengths of those back gardens, which in their yard or so of more or less infallibly register the degree of courage or impudence possessed by the original squatters and their immediate descendants upon this land. For the sites of these cottages and their little pleasaunces were all originally stolen, cabbaged, pinched, nicked—what you will—from the common land of the marshes; and where you see a yard or two of extra length, there may be observed, set down in concrete form, the measure of that courage possessed by those squatters in times gone by. Such illegitimate intakes are no longer possible, for publicity alone, even were it not for the evidence of the Ordnance maps, would forbid, and the romance of them is a fossil survival, rather than a living thing.

The engine-houses, pumping water and filter-beds of the East London Water Company are the principal features of the Lea Bridge Road, and one would not deny them under certain conditions, and at a certain distance, a grandly impressive

quality. At a distance, assuredly, for viewed close at hand, with the giant machinery seen through the windows, slowly pulsing up and down to the accompaniment of a warm scent of oil, and with the lofty chimneys that in their specious ornamentation look afar off *almost* like Venetian *campanili*, seen really to be sooty smoke-stacks, it is astonishing how commonplace they become. And when you think of it, considering the matter on the basis of a wide acquaintance with waterworks, how singularly dry, husky, coaly, and gritty, and void of any suggestion of water these gigantic engine-houses of the great water companies always are!

The Lea Bridge Road, and indeed Woodford also, and Epping Forest generally, are to be avoided by quiet folks on Saturdays, Sundays, and at times of public holiday, when the coster-monger and his purple-faced "missus" drive their cowhocked ponies and attendant traps recklessly to the "Wake Arms," to the "Robin Hood," or to the pubs of Chingford, and all the waggonettes and all the beanfeasters in the East End of London are making merry in elephantine fashion.

The road finally leaves Walthamstow and the valley of the Lea at Knott's Green and Whip's Cross—at the present time an abject, down-at-heel compromise between a striving unsuccessful suburb and the open country. But in these latter days, when the neighbourhood of London changes with such startling rapidity, the true description of

to-day may very reasonably be the misleading record of to-morrow, and that squalid air of failure which belongs to those places at the present time of writing may already, ere these lines attain the dignity of print, have given place to an era of substantial and prosperous expansion.

Nothing is more depressing than the unsuccessful suburb, created out of nothing by the too sanguine builder in one of his inflated moments. It brings disaster, not only upon the author of its being, who reaps the harvest of his rashness in foreclosed mortgages and the Bankruptcy Court, but upon those enterprising callow tradesfolk who, embarking upon businesses of their own with insufficient resources, cannot tide over the time of no trade, and leave a record of their failure in deserted shops still proclaiming the virtues of the tea that no one ever bought and the advantages of those "bargain sales" that failed to attract.

Whip's Cross, as its name would imply, stands at a junction of roads. It forms the entrance to Epping Forest, and is said to have obtained the first part of its name from being the place whence the Forest deer-stealers were formerly whipped at the cart's tail; but such things are now quite put out of sight and forgotten in these marchlands of town and suburbs.

This is Leyton, twin sister of Walthamstow. Vast populations are springing up, and interminable streets of little houses, the meaner and more pitiful because so pretentious. A little while, and the cheaply-built "villas" develop

ominous cracks, the doors and windows warp and refuse to shut, or when shut decline to be opened, and the trivial brick gate-posts sink out of plumb. It would not be surprising in a few years to find that most of their slack-baked bricks had resolved into their native mud and road-scrapings.

For what do these huge populations exist? Life in the bulk must be very grey to them, whose individualities are sunk in the mass, who live in streets all precisely alike and in houses more kin to one another than the proverbial two peas. They exist, if you consider it, for truly great altruistic purposes; to be the *corpus vile* for governments, imperial or local, to experiment upon; and to be not only the milch-cow that supplies the funds for such governments, but the poor, senseless voting machine for whose support the candidates for Parliamentary and municipal honours struggle and lie and cheat. On their domestic and other needs thrive and wax fat the great trading companies that in their innumerable local branches are ousting the private shopkeeper and sending him in his old age to the Bankruptcy Court and the workhouse. For reasons such as these the swarming hives of wage-earners that ring round London and all the great cities make me melancholy. Let us away to the greenwood tree.

THE "EAGLE," SNARESBROOK: THE NORWICH MAIL PASSING, 1832. *From a print after J. Pollard.*

VII

The entrance to Epping Forest, the greenwood tree aforesaid, is by way of Snaresbrook, past the Eagle Pond, a pleasant lake which takes its name from that old coaching-house, the "Eagle," pictured here in the old print after Pollard. It is more than seventy years since that Old Master of coaching subjects painted this view of the Norwich Mail passing by, but the old house still stands, not so very greatly altered. Pollard has made it and its surrounding trees look more of the Noah's Ark order of architecture than ever they were.

Epping Forest is a glorious heritage, of which any city might well feel proud, and the public-spirited act of the Corporation of the City of London, by which it was secured in 1882 as a forest, for ever, for the free enjoyment of all, has never been fully appreciated. These are the days of popularly-elected bodies, dependent upon the votes of the million, and every little thing they perform at the public expense is trumpeted as though it were a benevolence. The Corporation of the City, however, is not elected by a popular vote, and is accustomed to do things without an eye upon the next election. It purchased Epping Forest in a purely public spirit, and administers it in precisely the same way. The thing was done none too soon, for nerveless and conflicting interests had long permitted squatters to settle in

the Forest lands, and already the suburban builder had begun to make his mark. As we pass the many Woodfords—Woodford, Woodford Green, and Woodford Wells—and come to Buckhurst Hill, the patches and snippets of common, village greens, and wayside selvedges of grass, saved with difficulty, show, outside the Forest proper, how the rural character was going.

Beyond Woodford Wells the way divides, to rejoin in less than three miles. To the right hand it leads through Loughton, and to the left past the more sylvan stretch by High Beech Green. "Here," one might say, with Longfellow, "here is the Forest primeval"; and tangled glades, marshy hollows, and secluded lawns are glimpsed by the traveller in passing, between the massy boles of immemorial trees. Not yet, fortunately, has the floor of the Forest been levelled and drained, and made like a London park, and it is still possible to find places with uncanny names, in an uncanny condition. Thus, Deadman's Slade is still as slippery a hollow as when it first obtained that name. Essex rustics have now forgotten many old words, and people who fall on ice or grease now slip because it is slippery; but not so long ago, throughout the whole of East Anglia, folks "slumped" because it was "slade."

It was most terrible, this woodland road in the old times, and the nocturnal voices of the Forest had heart-shaking significances. The pit-a-pat of heavy dewdrops from leafy boughs on to the dried leaves of last autumn sounded for

THE "WHITE HART," WOODFORD. *From a drawing by P. Palfrey.*

all the world like the stealthy footfalls of some lurking footpad, and the rise of some couching deer or the scuttle of a rabbit made the traveller stand still and face about, lest the rushing attack of the imaginary assassin should take him in the rear. Even the hooting of the owls, one against the other, were sounds of dread, and for all the world like rallying calls of midnight prowlers on their unholy errands.

VIII

Highwaymen early made their appearance on this road, and from very remote times the great Forest of Epping was dreaded by travellers on their account. But it was not until Newmarket's fame as a racing and gambling centre arose, in the time of James I., that these long miles became so especially notorious. One of the very worst periods would seem to have been that of Charles II., under whose ardent patronage of the Turf the Court was frequently, and for long periods, in residence at Newmarket. Not the Forest alone, but the road in general, together with the several routes to this metropolis of racing, were thus infested.

This scandalous condition of affairs attracted attention so early as 1617, when travellers went in fear, not only of the professional highwaymen,

but of the gentlemanly amateurs as well, who, either for pure love of a roystering life, or from being ruined by losses on the turf or at the gaming-tables, lurked by the roadside, and, with terrible menaces, robbed all classes of wayfarers.

A satirist of that period, one William Fennor, in the course of a pamphlet he published in 1617, called the "Competers' Common-Wealth," tells us much about those reckless blades. A "competer" was, of course, one who gambled on the turf or at the tables. Fennor, describing how ill-luck, sharpers, and money-lenders between them plucked the gamesters clean, so that there was nothing for them but to retrieve their fortunes on the road, says that Newmarket Heath, in especial, swarmed with such highwaymen, who stooped to the meanness of robbing even the rustics of their pence, and were such keen gleaners of small change that scarce any money was left in the neighbourhood. "Poor Countrie people," he says, "cannot passe quietly to the Cottages, but some Gentlemen will borrow all the money they have." Fennor was a man of a grimly humorous nature, and observed that these doings caused Tyburn Tree and Wapping Gibbets to have "many hangers-on." A good many, however, escaped; for they had a very ingenious plan, when they had brought off successful robberies, and the hue-and-cry grew too hot, of posting to London, where they arranged to be arrested and thrown into prison for a small

debt. By lying in such seclusion until the matter cooled, they generally escaped, "for," concludes Fennor, "who would look in such a place for such offenders?"

But such paltry robberies were altogether thrown into the shade by that of 1622, when a company of India and Muscovy merchants, going to Newmarket to pay their respects to James I., were robbed of their papers and a bag containing £200.

To quote all the accounts of such affairs would be to occupy many pages, but some remarkable instances may be given. A London paper of March, 1680, tells how "A Gentleman with some of his family being in the coach with six horses going to Newmarket, was set upon by some Highway-men, and robbed of all his Money, Watch, Rings, Stone Buttons, and a pair of Lac'd Sleeves. And about four hours after, two Coaches coming from Cambridge, the persons in them were robb'd of several hundred pounds; there were but five Highway-men, two of them setting upon one coach, and three on the other; but at their departure they were so noble as to give the two coachmen two Half-crowns, to drink their healths. The coaches were within a mile of Newmarket when they were robb'd, at a place called the Devil's Ditch."

A parlous place, this Devil's Ditch. It was the scene of a pitched battle between the highwaymen and the exasperated country folk in 1682. According to the *Domestic Intelligence* of

August 24th, in that year, five highwaymen robbed a coach on the Heath, and secured £59 and a very considerable booty in the way of gold lace, silks, and linen. Before they could make off with the plunder, the rustics had been roused, and were stationed in a body in the cleft of that bank, impracticable for horsemen, through which the road runs. The highwaymen were thus shut in by this stoppage of the only exit from the Heath. Had they retreated, they would have been captured in Newmarket town, and so they were forced to make a desperate dash for liberty. "Knowing themselves Dead Men by the Law, if they were taken, they charged through the Countrymen, and by Firing upon them Wounded four, one of which we since understand is Dead of his Wounds." So these Knights of Industry got clear away, and the liberal art of robbery upon the highway continued to flourish; for, three weeks later, two gentlemen were duly reported to have been robbed of seven guineas and their watches while riding over the Heath.

The professors of this art were so romantic in the eyes of youth that many a stable-boy or ostler "borrowed" a horse and took the road in admiring imitation. Daniel Wilkinson, advertised for in the *London Gazette* during March, 1683, was probably one of these. The advertisement describes him as "a little short Man, about 26 years old, with short light brown Hair, a hairy Mould near his Chin, in a grey Hat, and Leather Breeches," and goes on to state that he "Hired,

on the 4th Instant, at Newmarket, a bald Gelding, Wall-Eyed, above 14 hands high, eight or nine Years old, of a Chesnut colour, a short Mane and short Tail, and some white about his Feet, with a Hog-skin Saddle, and a white Cotton Saddle-Cloth, to ride to Cambridge, but has not been since heard of. Whosoever gives notice of the Horse or Man at the Green-Dragon in Bishop-Gate-street, or to Thomas Gambeling, at Newmarket, shall have 20*s*/-. and their Charges."

I do not think the advertiser ever heard of Daniel Wilkinson or of his wall-eyed horse again; although it does not seem to have been a very desirable animal.

Horses of good points were duly noticed by the highwaymen of the Heath, and many an one was taken by force from the groom exercising them. An instance of this is found in an offer of a reward, appearing in the *London Gazette*, of March 15th, 1686, when a "Black Mare, 15 hands high, about 4 Years old, having all her paces," was "taken away from a Gentleman's Man upon Newmarket Heath, by several Highway-men." Three guineas and expenses were offered as a reward, but we may readily suppose that no one ever qualified for it.

The dangers of the road became even more acute twelve years later, in the reign of William III., when the wars in which England had been engaged were brought for the while to a conclusion; and disbanded soldiers lacking civil employment, and probably not wanting any while

"the Road," as an institution, remained possible, made every highway as dangerous to travellers as an expedition into an enemy's country would have been. Epping Forest formed a most convenient centre for such as these; for it was densely wooded, contained caves and natural harbourages for desperadoes, and commanded several roads. Here a fraternity of freebooters, to the number of thirty, sworn to stand by one another to the last extremity, found a home in the leafy coverts in the neighbourhood of High Beech and Waltham Cross. Never, since the romantic days of Robin Hood and Little John, in their refuge under the greenwood trees of Sherwood Forest, had England known the like. These brethren built huts and storehouses, and came forth when they thought fit, to plunder and to slay. The King, journeying to Newmarket with distinguished company, was safe only because well escorted; and others, not so strongly guarded, were attacked, with loss of life, soon after he had passed.

An armed force, cautiously advancing into these wilds, did at last succeed in destroying the houses of this gang of land buccaneers, but they soon assembled again, and were strong enough, or impudent enough, to send a written and signed challenge to the Government, to come and dislodge them; which the Government accordingly did, in its own good time, in 1692, when, by the heroic method of posting detachments of Dragoons at a distance of ten miles from London on all the great roads, and by forming a chain of

patrols, the highwaymen were in some instances brought to battle, killed or captured, or driven out of the business for a time, until such unusually severe measures were withdrawn and the Gentlemen of the Road were again suffered to pursue their avocation in peace.

They flourished for many a long year after, and the newspapers continually teemed with accounts of coach and other robberies. On the morning of December 28th, 1729, the "Norwich and St. Edmund's Bury coaches" were stripped by two highwaymen half a mile on the London side of Bishop's Stortford, and they afterwards not only robbed three gentlemen on horseback, but made away with the bridles and drove the horses off. Fortunate, indeed, for the dismounted trio that the town was so near! Again, we read, under date of April 25th, 1730: "The Earl of Godolphin's gentleman was robb'd last week in the Bury coach of £50 and a gold watch"; while the detailed account of another robbery, in 1731, affords some amusement: "About three o'clock in the afternoon of November 21st, the Norwich, Bury, and Cambridge stage-coaches were robbed by two highwaymen near the three-mile stump in Epping Forest. The passengers were robbed to the extent of £30. In the Norwich coach was a Clergyman and two Tradesmen who had been at Sir Robert Walpole's house in Norfolk, to assist in the entertainment of the Duke of Lorraine, and a lad who was coming to town, to be put apprentice. The Clergyman saved his portmanteau, with a great deal of gold

in it, by persuading the robbers that it contained nothing but a few sermons, but they took away the boy's portmanteau, with all his clothes. While the coaches were under examination, two horsemen appeared near the wood, upon which the Highwaymen rode up and dismounting them, forced them into the wood, and there bound them with their own belts and gaiters, and then rode off."

IX

The "Wake Arms" inn stands where the roads by High Beech Green and Loughton join again. In the old days it was a posting-house of some celebrity, and a prize-fighting, cock-fighting, and badger-drawing resort of a considerable notoriety. Near it, on the right side of the road towards Epping, are those prehistoric earthworks, largely overgrown with ancient trees, called Ambresbury Banks, and supposed to take their names from Ambrosius Aurelius, a half-legendary Romanised British chieftain who died about A.D. 500. This, too, is one of the very many sites found for Boadicea's last battle.

Epping village, or townlet, is a particularly long one, heralded by a gigantic water-tower, of distinctly unlovely design, and neighboured by a modern church, built to render religious exercises easier than when the only place of worship was the old parish church, two miles away.

The most striking note of Epping, apart from the generous width of its street, is the extraordinary number of inns and places for all kinds of refreshment. Of these the "Thatched House" is the most notable, but is now no more thatched than is the "Thatched House Club" in London. There is a baulking air of picturesqueness in the long view down Epping street, but, taken in detail and analysed, it is evasive, and certainly most elusive when sought to be transferred to paper.

AMBRESBURY BANKS.

At Thornwood Common, some two miles onward, we encounter the uttermost notice-board of the City Corporation, and bid good-bye to the Forest. Thence, crossing a high ridge of quiet country, we come steeply down hill, past the "Sun and Whalebone" inn, and across picturesque Potter Street Common, with its avenues and modern church, to the single-streeted hamlet of Potter Street. This again gives place to the village of Harlow, with a sprinkling of plastered and gabled houses and an exceedingly ugly Union Workhouse.

Harlow is a village with a preposterously urban air, and as much "side" as that of a hobbledehoy who fancies himself a grown man. The reason of this attitude is found, perhaps, in Harlow possessing, not only a railway station, but a busy wharf as well, on the Stort Navigation. That wharf is nearly a mile away down the road, and all that

"SAPSWORTH."

distance the highway is punctuated with the coal-droppings from the carts that ply between that waterway and the village.

Beyond the wharf comes Sawbridgeworth, also owing its sustained prosperity to the canalised Stort, and still not only a busy townlet, but also a very old-fashioned one. It is still essentially a

town of malt, and the old wooden and cowled malt-houses remain to this day its chief characteristic.

Until quite recently known to its natives as "Sapsworth," Sawbridgeworth has at last lost that archaic distinction. Now that every country lad is taught to spell and read, and the yokel has the evidence of the finger-posts, among other things, to tell him that it is "Sawbridgeworth," it is of no use to tell him that his father and mother called it otherwise. "I kin read, cawnt I?" he asks, citing the finger-post as a witness. It is quite certain that the stranger who should nowadays ask for Sapsworth would be as little understood as were the travellers of old who enquired for Sawbridgeworth.

At Harlow wharf the road left Essex and entered Hertfordshire, and so runs through Sawbridgeworth and the hamlets of Spelbrook and Thorley Street to Bishop's Stortford. Just short of that town there is a choice of ways. By bearing to the left, Bishop's Stortford is entered direct; by keeping to the right, along what was once known as "Queen Anne's new road," the coaches bound for places beyond avoided Bishop's Stortford altogether, and set down passengers for it at the suburb of Hockerill.

Hockerill is on the hill, Bishop's Stortford is in the hole, and, as its name would imply, beside the river Stort, dividing the two counties of Essex and Herts.

We will take the left-hand, and older, road, for the excellent reason that along it, on the

uttermost outskirts of the town, there stands a house even already historic, and in years to come destined to be something of a shrine. No saint, indeed, was born beneath its roof, but a man whose memory is much more worshipful than that of the majority in the hierarchy of the Blessed. If you love your country, you cannot choose but be interested in this house, and cannot do aught but reverence that man who was born here: the man who saved Central Africa for the Empire. We are all Imperialists now, and patriotism is cheap to-day, but it was a frame of mind entertained by few when Rhodes first became an expansionist. Those were the days when Gladstone was the wet-nurse of sucking alien ambitions, the friend of every country but his own, and ready to surrender anything and everything in the sacred cause of foreign nationalities. If Rhodes was an expansionist, may we not with justice apply the term "contractionist" to the great demagogue, that great master of phrases that sounded so full of meaning and were really so empty, whose life was equally divided by the making of speeches and the explaining of them away?

In this house, then—a very commonplace semi-detached stuccoed house—Cecil John Rhodes, founder of Rhodesia, son of the Rev. F. W. Rhodes, vicar of Stortford, was born, July 5th, 1853.

No sketch is needed here of a career whose record is writ in the politics of his time, and

BIRTHPLACE OF CECIL RHODES.

indelibly scored in the history of his country. Like Moses, it was not given him actually to enter that Promised Land of Empire he had seen afar, but when he died, in 1902, the fruition of the idea was at least assured. He looked, like some Prophet, upon South and Central Africa, and with the phrase, "English, all English, that's my dream!" made a comprehensive span upon the map. A very pleasant dream too. Conceive what a nightmare the world would be if predominance were given the brutal German, the frenzied Frenchman, or the thinly veneered Russian savage! We are the salt of the earth, and let us savour it as strongly as we can. Thinking thus, it behoves us to honour this great Empire-builder in the bulk, even though we may criticise him in detail.

X

Bishop's Stortford is a pleasant and an old-fashioned market-town, with a great and fussy air of business, a long High Street running in the valley near, and parallel with, the Stort, and a large parish church perched on the shoulder of a precipitous street most picturesquely and accurately named Windhill. Natives have long since dropped the first half of the name and know it as "Stortford," except indeed when they say "Strawford," as very often they do.

There was, once upon a time, a fine strong and damp castle in the Stort meadows, midway between the town and its suburb of Hockerill, a stronghold of the Bishops of London from the

WINDHILL, BISHOP'S STORTFORD.

time of William the Conqueror, but it has long since disappeared and only a green, tree-covered mound remains. Its name was Waytemore, a name with a suspicion of grim humour about it, traditions still tell how the zealous Bonner

HENRY GILBEY.

imprisoned many a heretic here, before burning them at the stake; but the martyrs suffered and went to Heaven, and the Bishop to Hell, so long since that it is difficult to probe the truth of the stories.

There are old and quaint inns in the town; the "Black Lion" the most ancient, and certainly at this time the most picturesque of them, but the "Boar's Head," on Windhill, is little less so; and, moreover, grouping finely with that parish church already named, makes a picture. It is a great church and a fine one, even though that tall spire be poor Gothic and its four satellite pinnacles abjectly bad. Up to the present the church contains no memorial to Rhodes, but students of coaching history find interest in the polished Aberdeen granite stone in the churchyard, in memory of Henry Gilbey, father of Sir Walter Gilbey, Bart. The inscription runs:—

HENRY GILBEY

OF THIS TOWN, MANY YEARS COACH PROPRIETOR,

DIED SEPTEMBER 29TH, 1842,

AGED 52 YEARS.

There are even yet a few ancients in Bishop's Stortford who remember "old Harry Gilbey," as they call him, and speak of him as in partnership with one William Low, of Saffron Walden, in the coach running between that place, Bishop's Stortford, and London. This coach was taken over by Henry Gilbey, as sole proprietor, shortly

after 1824. Besides this—the "Old Stortford Coach," as it was called—he had another, running between the "George," Bishop's Stortford, and London. Both called at the "Crown," Hockerill, a house demolished in 1903, and went to and returned from the "Bull," Aldgate, until 1841, when the railway was opened to Bishop's Stortford.

HOCKERILL.

Henry Gilbey, who was son of Daniel Gilbey, proprietor of the "White Bear," Stansted, was born January 29th, 1789. He married, at the age of 25, in 1814. From 1829 he resided at the house, still standing, called "The Links," on Windhill, where the future Sir Walter Gilbey was born, in 1831.

THE "CROWN," HOCKERILL. DEMOLISHED 1903. *From a drawing by P. Palfrey.*

XI

Travellers by road who fleet from Hockerill on to Newport, turning neither to the right nor left, pass through Stansted Street and know nothing of the ancient village of Stansted Mountfitchet, of which it is an offshoot. It is a pity, for that village is a distinctly interesting place. Turning to the right-hand at the cross-roads, one arrives at the centre of the old settlement in less than half a mile. It was originally built in a deep hollow, under the heavy shadow of the giant earthworks on whose shoulders the Gernons or Montfichets in early Norman times built a tremendous Giant Blunderbore of a castle. Somewhere here, in very remote times, stood a stone building, probably a ruined Roman villa, whence the Saxon name of Stane Stead derived; but its site and its history are alike unknown, and the knightly deeds of the Montfichets are equally forgotten. That Norman family obtained its original name of Gernon from some ancestor who especially distinguished himself by going unshaven in times when (if we may believe the evidence of the clean-shaven, or merely moustached, effigies of Norman warriors) it was the fashion to shave. His comrades, like the vulgar boys of the present day, who shout "there's 'air!" after any inordinately hairy person, gave him the nickname of "Les Gernons," which means "Whiskers"; and, in a manner common

at that time, when family names derived from individual peculiarities, it was as "Whiskers" that his descendants became known, whether they went whiskered or whiskerless. They are found referred to as "Gernon" and "Grenon," but it was not very long before they dropped the name for that of their castle, built on the ancient mound that was here when they came, and named by them "Mont Fiché," or "firm mount."

It is many years since these ancient lords of Stansted became extinct, and even the famous family of De Veres, who succeeded to their property, has followed them into oblivion. Their stout castle, too, has gone the way of many another sturdy fortalice, and only the great mounds and fosses that girdle and seam the hillside are left. "Only," we say, but a word with so depreciatory a sound is scarcely in order when used in connection with these impressive earthworks that fire the imagination of even the casual railway traveller. For it is from the railway those castle mounds are most impressively seen, just as it is from the railway station that Stansted village looks its best. In the hasty glance from the passing train, the village roofs, rising one above the other up the hillside, seem to be crowned by the dignified tower of some benignant old church, richly pinnacled and turreted in the South Devon manner, and it is only on closer acquaintance one discovers this to be no worshipful old building, but the modern (1889) district church of St. John, built

THE "WHITE BEAR," STANSTED. *From a drawing by P. Palfrey.*

to the joint honour and glory of God and one of the Pulteney family. It is built of red brick, with Bath stone enrichments—*very* rich and sugary, and probably from the designs of a confectioner principally engaged in the manufacture of ornamental Twelfth-cakes. The exterior of the tower, prodigal in pinnacles, crockets, and mediæval fandanglums of all sorts, and stuck about with blank windows that open upon nothing, is surely the last word in the ready-made picturesque, and lacks the reposeful dignity properly belonging to a church. The interior, where there is less scope for riotous fancy, is better.

The old church is over a mile distant from the village, and stands in or beside Stansted Park. Its situation, remote from the life of the place, but closely adjoining the Hall, tells us that the ancient lords of Stansted who built and maintained it held the welfare of their own souls dear, and that of the people's immortal part altogether too cheap. Indeed, rightly considered, the building and maintenance of this and many another church of its kind was in the nature of an insurance policy against fire—the dreaded eternal fire.

It is a small Norman and Early English building, restored in 1889 and rubbed up and carpeted in rather a drawing-room style of comfort, so that the monumental effigies look somewhat second-hand and apologetic. The battered, crusading, or, at any rate, cross-legged, effigy of one Roger de Lancaster looks even tenth-hand, and, shoved into a dimly lighted corner, with a bar of Windsor soap

in his mouth, a mop and a pail and other housewifely things disposed negligently about his mailed person, is the picture of ancient dignity in reduced circumstances. The tomb, with recumbent effigy, in the south wall of the chancel, is that of Sir Thomas Middleton, 1631. With him lies his wife, killed by a stag in Stansted Park.

The alabaster tomb, with life-sized and coloured effigy of Esther Salusburye in the Lancaster Chapel, is found unexpectedly by the stranger, behind the organ. The full-length figure lying there, so naturally coloured and dressed in the height of fashion of that bygone year of 1604, when she died, is so extraordinarily lifelike that one almost shrieks with momentary fright; and indeed the work is so perfect, it rather resembles a human being masquerading as an effigy than a mere carved and painted mass of stone. Her high-heeled shoes, the black-painted Early Jacobean skirt and bodice, with the deep lace cuffs, generous ruff, and high-crowned hat, form a perfect picture of an English lady's costume in the days when James I. was King.

Stansted Street, skirting the main road with its old-fashioned but nondescript houses, has lost much of its picturesqueness of late years. The "White Bear," kept in old times by Daniel Gilbey, and the "Old Bell" have disappeared, and it rejoices in a very new and ornate white brick house, designed in the snoburban style of architecture. A horse at full stretch is carved over the door, together with the inscription, "Galloping

THE "OLD BELL," STANSTED. *From a drawing by P. Palfrey.*

Villa." If you ask any of the admiring villagers for information about this astonishing house, and why "Galloping," they tell you "it belongs to Mr. ——, of the roundabouts." Immediately opposite is a house and shop, whose builder or owner appears to have been extraordinarily proud of his building, for it bears not only the date of the year, but even the day of the particular month when it was finished: "L.S.T., July y^e^ 25, 1759."

The very handsome old red-brick house, standing high above the road on approaching Ugley, and attracting attention by its fine wrought-iron gates and general air of distinction, is Orford House, built by Admiral Edward Russell, who commanded the allied English and Dutch fleets in their victory over the French at La Hague in 1692. The Admiral was created Earl of Orford in 1727.

The country grows particularly pretty as we approach Ugley, fields giving place to dense plantations, with oak woods and almost impenetrable coverts, presenting a vivid picture to the mind's eye of what the great Forest of Essex must have been like in the long ago. "What's in a name?" asks Shakespeare. Not much here, if we take that of Ugley by its sound; but a good deal if we make due enquiry, for it is really "Oakley," the "oak meadow," and, as Oakley, we do actually now find certain upstart signposts and wayside parish marks naming it. Again, if we leave the road and take the footpath that leads across a meadow (? the original "oak lea") to the church, we shall find

in the little churchyard the tombstone of an incumbent, dead not long since, who is described as vicar of "Oakley." He had probably been a lifelong sufferer from the old rhymed pleasantry :—

> Ugly church, ugly steeple,
> Ugly parson, ugly people.

In short, only the handsomest of men with the most amiable of natures can possibly afford to take the living of Ugly, for should the parson be plain, the obvious remarks as to his peculiar fitness for the place would become a burden to him, and unless of an angelic disposition, his "ugly temper" might be commented upon. Fortunately Ugley is among the smallest of places, and therefore the Ugley girls with feelings to be scarified by such a description are few. But, on the other hand, how easy the way to a most ingratiating compliment, in the exclamation of surprise :—

"You come from Ugley? Impossible!"

"Why impossible?"

"Because——"

But here you fill the hiatus to your own individual taste in flattery.

The embarrassments of such a place-name are many, and are not so easily surmounted as those of the Scilly Islanders, who are "Scillonians," rather than Scilly people. Ugley, however, has a near neighbour in misfortune, in the hamlet of Nasty, to be found by the curious, scarce more than ten miles away, between Great Munden and Braughing, in Hertfordshire.

Ugley is said to have been the "Quercetum" of the Romans, so named by them "from the locality abounding in oaks." In Domesday Book it is "Uggheley," and it is even found written

UGLEY CHURCH.

by some ancient vulgarian as "Huggele," a really h'odious variant.

Ugley church is situated, as I have here made effort to show, in a very pretty setting of trees. They are not oaks, as they should be; but that would be to dot the "i's" and cross the "t's" of

allusion, and we must not expect such fitness and completeness. It is a small church, placed just outside a farmyard, but stands otherwise solitary and unheeded by those who keep the main road. It might be thought the Georgian red-brick tower was built on to the ancient body by some one concerned to make it fit the place-name—for it is not beautiful—did we not know that Georgian towers, and churches too, were commonly hideous, and this, therefore, by no means exceptional. But the kindly aid of Nature has done much here, and "that rare old plant, the ivy green," has mantled the stark design to such purpose that it now gives the ideal rustic effect presented by the literary efforts of Gray's "Elegy," and the artistic convention of Birket Foster's drawings. Its note is one with the Christmas cards of our youth, when no one was ashamed of such pictures as that of the old parish church in the snow, or the Robin Redbreast on his spray of holly.

XII

QUENDON, a scattered little village prettily situated where the road broadens out and curves slightly, with broad margins of grass, bears a resemblance to Trumpington, on the Cambridge Road. In advance of the cottages stands a picturesque modern well-house and fountain, with a beautifully designed horse-trough, "given to

Quendon and Rickling in memory of Caroline Mary Cranmer-Byng," as an inscription states. Quite at the end of the village is the "Coach and Horses" inn, a survival of posting and coaching days, very much in its old condition. Beyond it the open road leads into Newport.

Newport, whose name has nothing whatever to do with a water port, derives that title from its situation on a new road—a new gate, or door, or portal—made at some unrecorded time through the Forest of Essex. It is now nothing but a village, as picturesque and delightful as any on the road, but fallen from its ancient importance, and overshadowed by Saffron Walden, only three miles away. Time was—a very long while ago—when Newport had a market and Saffron Walden had none. At that time Newport was one of the many manors belonging to Harold, and it continued to be a Royal manor for some time after the Conquest; coming afterwards into the hands of the Magnavilles. There was a castle at Newport in those days, and a lake, whence the old name for this place of "Newport Pond." Tradition tells that the pond or lake was situated where the railway station is now, but of it and of that castle no traces have survived. The fortunes of Newport fell, and those of Saffron Walden began to rise, when the Empress Maud, somewhere about 1142, authorised Geoffrey de Magnaville to transfer the market to Walden, and although, some sixty years later, in 1203, King John granted Newport the right to hold an annual

fair, this stricken town never recovered from the blow inflicted by the loss of its market privileges. A century later the Manor of Newport belonged to an historical character—that Piers Gaveston, the favourite of Edward II., who was executed, murdered, or done to death in 1310 on Blacklow Hill, near Warwick, by insurgent Barons, jealous of his influence over the King. The fate of Gaveston seems to prove how dangerous was the stinging gift of satire in the early part of the fourteenth century. That unfortunate man, raised by the King to the highest offices of State, of course became hateful to others not so successful, and his splendour, his arrogance, and, above all, the wittily offensive nicknames he showered upon that baronial crew, aggravated the original offence beyond endurance, so that they finally seized and beheaded him. It will be allowed that this eminently practical retort was even more stinging than the original satire, and certainly forbade a rejoinder.

Later lords of the manor of Newport have been more fortunate, or have been such comparatively obscure persons that their misfortunes are scarcely historic. Indeed, with the passing of Gaveston, the annals of the place are purely domestic, but none the less interesting; Newport is, in fact, singularly full of interest. Prominent in its broad street stands the beautiful old house of timbered frame and brick nogging known locally as "Monks' Barns," and said to have once been used by the monastery of St. Martin-in-

the-Fields as a country sanatorium, but much more likely to have been a Priest's House at the time when Newport church was under the joint control of Westminster Abbey and St. Martin's, and served from them. However that may be, this fine relic of the fifteenth century is now in secular occupation, and divided into two cottages. The interior is without interest; and its most beautiful and interesting feature the

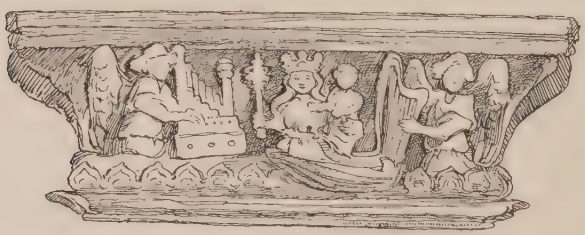
"MONKS' BARNS."

one most easily seen by the wayfarer—the fine old oak-framed oriel window looking upon the road and decorated with an elaborate and curious carving of the Coronation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

It was at Newport the route often taken by Charles II. to Newmarket, by way of Rye House, passing Rickling Church End and Wicken Bonant, fell into the existing highway.

It is still known as "London Lane"; the junction of roads remaining the most old-world corner of the village. The church, dominating the view at this point, looks almost cathedral-like, and its tower is strongly reminiscent of Great St. Mary's, Cambridge; but the interior proves less imposing, and the bare nave and wide chancel, built in the later and less refined style of Gothic, disappointing.

A memorial tablet on the chancel wall, plain in design, but grotesquely ornate in the epitaph



ANCIENT CARVING AT "MONKS' BARNS."

of the person it praises, hands down to us the memory of the many virtues of "Joseph Smith, M.A., of Shortgrove Hall." It appears that the worthy Smith, who died in 1822, was private secretary to William Pitt. It would be easier to recount the few virtues he was *not* possessed of than to recite a list of those that, according to his executors, rendered him such a phœnix. He—or they for him—wholly lacked humility.

Tragical memories are revived by the memorial window in the south aisle to the son of the vicar, one of the 130 who perished in the destruction

LONDON LANE, NEWPORT: WHERE CHARLES THE SECOND'S ROUTE TO NEWMARKET JOINED THE HIGHWAY.

by fire of the Theatre Royal, Exeter. An inscription tells how "This window was erected by loving friends in memory of Robert Morgan Tamplin, B.A., of Keble College, Oxford, who entered into his rest at Exeter, in the great fire, Monday, September 5th, 1887, aged 23 years."

The church has a treasure of sorts in the musty, dusty old theological library, stored away in the parvise chamber, over the porch. It is a treasure not likely to be greatly coveted, nor are its constituent volumes frequently read, consisting, as they do, of dull black-letter discourses on just those religious matters in which the learned are of necessity as ignorant as the veriest clod. Not even the best-equipped of those disputants could pierce the veil that hides from us the other world, and now they are gone hence and acquired that knowledge, or just become extinct, they cannot enlighten ourselves. All they could do was to raise cloudy disputations, and the dust one bangs out of their ponderous folios is typical of their useless labours.

A more desirable treasure is the ancient muniment-chest kept jealously under lock and key in the vestry. It is a weighty affair, covered with gilt lead, in perforated patterns, and secured with five locks. Inside the heavy lid are barbarically coloured paintings of the Crucifixion, the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. John, St. Peter, and St. Paul.

An early morning bell-ringing custom of immemorial antiquity is still maintained at

Newport, but happily not with all its old-time severity. It was not until 1875 that the local revolt broke out, and the four o'clock-in-the-morning bell-ringing during the winter was modified, and replaced by an eight in the morning peal in the months between Michaelmas and Lady Day. Bell-ringing at Newport was wont to be greatly favoured, for there was a nightly curfew, followed by a number of strokes corresponding with the day of the month. Then there was the "gleaners' bell," at harvest-time, rung to tell the poor the corn had been carried and they might go into the fields and glean. But modern agricultural machinery leaves nothing to be gathered up, and so gleaning is a lost chance.

XIII

Among the many points of interest in Newport, the still-surviving "Newport Toll" is certainly not least. In these latter days, when traffic fares the road unhindered, all public roads are toll-free —except the road through Newport. Pedestrians and cyclists in general, and the whole of the traffic from certain specified neighbouring villages are exempt; but waggons from elsewhere pay 2*d.* each, forwards and backwards; higglers' horses, $\frac{1}{2}d.$ each; and sheep and all other cattle, 4*d.* per score. The exempted places are: Newport,

Wicken, Saffron Walden, Great and Little Chesterford, the Wendens, Quendon, and Widdington.

How comes it, then, that this one toll survives when others have been abolished? That is a long story, but one that may readily be summarised here. It seems, then, up to some two hundred years ago the little stream which even now runs across the highway, and is known variously as Wicken Water and the Granta, was unbridged, and crossed only by a ford. Neither the county nor the parish would be at the expense of building a bridge, and at last the lord of the manor obtained an Act of Parliament which conferred upon him the right of building, and authorised the levying of those tolls which are collected to this day. The tolls are still vested in the lord of the manor, but are not very strictly enforced, and as the gate has not, for many years past, been closed, and is, indeed, half buried in the ground and nearly rotted away, a good many waggons and many cattle must, especially at night, escape paying. It was a Smith, of Shortgrove, who obtained the Act and built the bridge, and, although Shortgrove Park has been let, these rights are still in the family. The toll has often been disputed, and was once, indeed, some thirty years since, the subject of a law-suit, when the uncle of the present Smith asserted his rights, and won.

Before railways had come to clear the roads of most of the cattle and the waggons, the income

of this toll-gate was considerable, but in these days it is not worth the while of the owner of these petty rights to collect the small gains, and the toll-house has been let as an ordinary cottage, but, in consideration of the tolls, at a rent slightly above its value as a dwelling. The occupier is, therefore, in a rather sporting position, and, by strict attention to business and by keeping sleepless vigils, might stand to gain quite a respectable trifle of pocket-money out of sheep that pass in the night, or from waggons that creak and rumble by in the early hours of morn, before the day is well aired. But it is an elderly occupant, and many a fourpence and a twopence go unchallenged into the darkness. Only the slow-going vehicles and the flocks and herds of daytime find themselves intercepted. One of the most humorous things in connection with this quaint survival was an incident that came under the notice of the present writer, when a huge furniture-removing van—one of the kind that goes at a two-and-a-half miles an hour pace—was stopped, and, much to the amazement of the driver (who, in common with the world at large, thought all tolls to be things of the past), made to pay.

It is the most insignificant of streams that causes all this pother, and the smallest of bridges, but it can still be seen, where the road dips, how awkward the old ford must have been.

Near by stands the starkly ugly old gaol, put to other uses since the police business was trans-

ferred to Saffron Walden, and now, on account of the imitation fetters that still distinguish its frontage, known as "the Links."

Directly the bridge is crossed the road forks; the old road going downward in a curve to the right, along what must once have been a particularly wet and marshy course, the newer route continuing straight ahead, at a higher level. Both unite again in little over a hundred yards.

"NELL GWYNNE'S HOUSE," FORMERLY THE "HORNS" INN.

Between the two, and at a higher level than either, on road-bridges, arches, and embankments, goes the railway; the rail-level somewhat above the roofs of the very picturesque line of ancient farms, inns, and cottages that front the older route.

We have not even yet done with Newport, for it is beside this old road that one of the most interesting houses of the village stands. This

is the so-styled "Crown House," formerly the "Horns" inn, traditionally said to have been a posting-house or halting-place on the road, used by Charles II., Nell Gwynne, the dissolute George Villiers, second Duke of Buckingham, and the profligate Earl of Rochester. It displays an elaborately decorated frontage of moulded plaster, and takes its name from the crown in high relief over the door. Criticism has sought to destroy the tradition by pointing out that the date of 1692 over the doorway is five years later than the death of Nell, who died, aged thirty-seven, in 1687, and three later than the death of Charles; but traditions very often enshrine truths, and it is permissible to suppose the date merely records some old-time restorations or additions in honour of that exalted patronage and those patrons then so recently passed away. The "Crown House" is not interesting within, and except the hall, paved with black and white marble, it has no outstanding features. The house has long been untenanted. Attempts have recently been made to transfer these traditions to the "Coach and Horses" inn, near by; but although that is a very old house, its appearance does not quite support the dignity thus thrust upon it.

The very last of Newport's many notable features is the picturesque old farmhouse standing by itself, looking upon the road as one leaves for Audley End. This is "Hospital Farm," and its isolated position is thoroughly warranted, for it stands on the site of the ancient Leper Hospital

of Saints Mary and Leonard, founded here in the reign of King John by Richard de Newport. The garden wall still displays some fragments of stone said to have come from the chapel. Let us look on them with what veneration we may, even though they might equally well have come from the kitchen. It is with much more, and a very genuine, respect one gazes upon the Big Stone between that wall and the road. It is very pro-

"HOSPITAL FARM," AND "NEWPORT BIG STONE."

perly spelled with capital letters, for it is as "Newport Big Stone" the Essex folk know it, and besides, it has a history going back to many uncounted centuries before Richard de Newport and his lepers came here—a history no one can narrate, because it opened in those abysmal voids of time before history began to be. Passing farm-hands volunteer the information that it has been here all *their* time, which is fairly obvious, for

it is, in fact, a glacial boulder, and was left here by some expiring glacier in the beginning of things, before the men of the Stone Age came upon the scene; nay, even before the protoplasmal common ancestral jelly-fish began to crawl in the lifeless ooze. *Whence* it was brought on the shoulders of that sliding ice-pack perhaps not even the most cocksure geologist could say; but it is, of course, wholly alien from Essex, which has no stone of any kind. A ruddy sandstone, it might have come from Devonshire, from Worcestershire, or from Midland districts, where red sandstone is a native formation; but it would be a matter of speculation to attempt to fix its origin. It is very large, must needs be enormously weighty, and must in years past have been sorely tempting to road surveyors hungering in this stoneless county for road metal. But having escaped destruction in those bygone years, we may suppose Newport Big Stone is now pretty safe on that score. Its presence here may, for all we know, have influenced the founder of that thirteenth-century hospital to place his buildings at this particular spot; for in after-years it became known as the "Leper Stone," and was the rough-and-ready table on which old-time passers-by deposited their alms for the afflicted.

XIV

Passing by Shortgrove Park and Uttlesford Bridge, the dirty and dismal station of Audley End is noticed, down the left-hand road we take, on the way to discover what manner of place "Wendens Ambo" may be. To the present historian nothing is more attractive than a place with an odd name, and he has gone unconscionable distances out of his way, often to find the most unusual names enshrining the most commonplace towns and villages. But not always. Here, for example, Wendens Ambo is a quaint, old-world place, characteristically Essexian. In the churchyard is a tombstone to William Nicholson, who died, aged 104, in 1886. He had been midshipman on Nelson's *Vanguard*.

There are, or were, it seems, two Wendens—Great and Little. Their name derives from that Anglo-Saxon deity, Woden, who gives us the name of our Wednesday, *i.e.*, "Woden's day." In 1662 the ruined church of Little Wenden was cleared away and the two parishes united. Great Wenden swallowed Little Wenden, and altered its name to the present Latinised form, thus proclaiming that the present church does for the two: Wendens Ambo meaning, when properly Englished, Both Wendens, and incorrectly written "Wenden's" in the possessive case, as though the place were Ambo, belonging to some manorial Wenden:—Wenden, his Ambo.

Audley End Station takes its name from that great palace a mile distant, whose site was given to Lord Chancellor Audley by Henry VIII. in 1538. The Abbey of Walden then stood here; an ancient foundation built, like most monastic establishments, in a pleasant vale, beside a fishful stream. It was a noble piece of spoil, and prob-

WENDENS AMBO.

ably the richest of all the plundered monastic tit-bits that came the artful Chancellor's way. He was thus a great receiver of stolen property, but put a portion of his gains, at least, to good use, for he founded Magdalene College, Cambridge, as the epitaph on his tomb, in the course of surely one of the most shockingly bad puns in existence, tells us. The founder of "M—audley—n" College

lies, indeed, in the beautiful church of Saffron Walden, within sight of Audley End, and there you shall read how—

> The stroke of Death's inevitable dart
> Hath now, alas! of lyfe beraft the hart
> Of Syr Thomas Audeley, of the Garter Knight,
> Late Chancellor of England under owr Prince of might
> Henry Theight, wyrthy high renowne,
> And made by him Lord Audeley of this towne.

The great pile of Audley End was not, however, reared in his time, and although when it arose it was given his name, which it still bears, it speedily, for lack of heirs of his blood, came into altogether alien hands. His daughter was sole heiress. She married, at the age of fourteen, Lord Henry Dudley, and when he died, became wife of the widowed fourth Duke of Norfolk. She died at the age of twenty-three, and the Duke then married for the third time, became for the third time a widower, and finally closed his career in the approved way by dabbling in conspiracy and getting beheaded for it. His son, that Lord Thomas Howard who so signally helped to destroy the Spanish Armada, was restored to the estates, made Lord High Treasurer and created successively Baron Howard de Walden and Earl of Suffolk. It was he who built the vastly spacious and vastly costly house of Audley End, of which the existing building, large though it be, is only a portion. In 1721, and again in 1749, great ranges of it were taken down by the then owners,

unable to bear the enormous expense of maintaining so huge a place. The building and furnishing of Audley End are said to have cost the Lord High Treasurer not less than £200,000. He began the works in 1603, and not until thirteen years later were they completed. Well might James I., who visited the incomplete palace, declare, with sarcastic meaning, that "it was too much for a King, though it might do very well for a Lord Treasurer." It was not an ill-founded belief that the treasury chests of the nation had been laid under contribution for the benefit of my Lord's building extravagances. His wife, too, was credited in public opinion with receiving bribes from the Constable of Castile, and the saying thus arose that "Audley End was built with Spanish gold." Whatever may be the truth of those charges, certainly this magnificent man rather overdid his magnificence, with the result that his descendants could not live in the place, and the third Earl sold it to Charles II. in 1666. At that time the King, who had already become a great patron of the Turf at Newmarket, had no adequate lodging there, and was easily persuaded to buy Audley End for £50,000. That easy-going monarch probably purchased Lord Suffolk's white elephant more for the sake of relieving him of the burden of it than for any liking himself had taken to a place twenty miles away from Newmarket Heath, and therefore not in those times particularly convenient for seeing the races. Only £30,000 of the purchase money was ever paid:

the rest remained on mortgage. For some few occasions Audley End was used by the Court, but chiefly by the more reputable section of it. Here, while Charles was housed at Newmarket with courtiers of an infamous stamp, the Queen and her household led a country life so remarkable for its dulness that on one occasion, in October, 1670, to save themselves from dying of *ennui*, they are found going in disguise to Saffron

AUDLEY END.

Walden fair. A curious contemporary letter tells of this interlude :—

"Last week there was a Faire neare Audley End, the Queen, the Dutchess of Richmond and the Dutchess of Buckingham had a frolick to disguise themselves like country-lasses, in red petticoates, wastcoates, etc., and soe goe see the Faire. Sir Bernard Gascoign, on a cart-jade, rode before the Queen, another stranger before Dutchesse of Buckingham, and Mr. Roper before Richmond. They all soe overdone it in their

disguise, which look'd soe much more like the Antiques than Country volk, that as soon as they came to the Faire the people began to goe after them; but the Queen, going to a booth, to buy a pair of yellow stockings for her sweet hart, and Sir Bernard asking for a pair of gloves, stitcht with blue, for his sweet hart, they were soon, by their gebrish, found to be strangers, which drew a bigger flock about them. One amongst them had seen the Queen at dinner, knew her, and was proud of her knowledge: this soon brought all the Faire into a crowd, to stare at the Queen. But thus discovered, they, as soon as they could, got to their horses; but as many of the Faire as had horses got up with their wives, children, sweet harts, or neighbours behind them, to get as much gape as they could till they brought them to the Court gate. Thus, by ill conduct, was a merry frolick turned into a pennance."

The Earl of Suffolk and his successors did not do so badly over this incompleted purchase, for to one of their kin was given the care of the place, together with the salaried post of Housekeeper and Keeper of the Wardrobe, and at last, in 1701, when it became evident that no King or Queen was ever likely to reside here, Audley End was reconveyed to the fifth Earl of Suffolk, on the easy terms of his undertaking to relinquish his claims to the outstanding £20,000. The Earls of Suffolk ended in 1745, when the tenth of that title died and was illegally succeeded in the pro-

perty by his kinsman, the Earl of Effingham, from whom the Countess of Portsmouth, one of the two daughters and co-heiresses of Lord Griffin, who were the true but dispossessed owners, bought the house and estate. Her heir was her nephew, John Griffin Whitwell, who in 1788 became Baron Braybrooke. Again, on his death, childless, the property changed hands, coming into possession of the Nevilles, who still own it and the Braybrooke title.

That account tells something of the quick changes and varied fortunes of Audley End, but only a lengthy disquisition could describe its appearance and contents. Pepys in 1669 made something of an attempt, but the most convincing part of his discourse is that where he describes how the housekeeper "took us into the cellar, where we drank most admirable drink, a health to the King. Here I played on my fflageolette, there being an excellent echo." But the still more excellent echo seems to have been that echo of the first drink with which he refreshed himself after his flageolet-playing. He was here again, and once more in the cellars where it is not surprising that he found "much good liquors. And indeed the cellars are fine; and here my wife and I did sing, to my great content. And then to the garden, and there did eat many grapes, and took some with us."

There is little use describing the contents of Audley End at second-hand, which is the only way it can be done, for the Braybrookes have

excluded the public. But there are exceptionally fine views of the exterior from the high road, and from the slip road into Saffron Walden. From this last the fine bridge over the Cam comes effectively into the picture, but seen from the high road, the great house not only stands nakedly disclosed, across bare pastures, with never an intervening hedge or tree, but looks coldly inhospitable and desolate, even although the extensive stone front is designed in the rich Jacobean style. The prominent, copper-covered cupolas are a bright green.

But if Audley End does by no means look homely, the scenery is delightful. The road passes through an open common on the left, planted with park-like clumps of trees, and with the pretty feature of green alleys cut through dense coppices. Ahead, down the road, the red-brick gabled stables of the mansion, older than the mansion itself, lend a ruddy and cheerful tone. Beyond them the lodge-gates are passed: modern additions, with the great stone bull's heads of the Nevilles' crest surmounting the piers, and on the roof-ridge of the lodge an heraldic griffin ramped up on his hinder part and holding two daggers in his paws. He is a would-be impressive griffin, but his singularly apologetic attitude, like that of a French poodle on his hind legs, begging for biscuits and conscious all the while that he is making a fool of himself, is only laughable.

XV

SAFFRON WALDEN lies a mile distant, on a ridge overlooking a wide stretch of country, and is one of the prettiest and neatest of rural corporate towns. To the whole countryside it is merely "Walden." No local person would ever think

SAFFRON WALDEN.

of saying "Saffron" Walden; and really, now there is no longer any saffron grown here, why should he? Prominent, far and near, is the great Perpendicular church, bracketed with that of Thaxted as the finest in Essex. Not a little of its proud dominance over neighbouring hill

and dale is due to the tall, tapering crocketed spire, added so late as 1831, and one of the earliest and most successful efforts of the Gothic revival. The very late Perpendicular clerestoried nave, with noble timbered roof, is singularly like the great Gothic Guildhall Library in London, which would almost seem to have been designed by its modern architect after this ancient model.

Walden is, and has always been, a great stronghold of the Friends, and the Friends' Schools are among the most prominent of the public buildings in the town. It is a town of old and new in just proportions, and with a staid prosperity not pushful enough to be vulgar, nor so allied to modernity that it must needs sweep away its old relics. In Church Street, indeed, is to be found one of the most curious old plaster houses that any town or village can boast. This is the old "Sun" inn, an inn no longer, decorated with two gigantic armed figures in plastiferous relief. For whom they may be intended, only the designer of them could say, and he cannot tell us, for if we may believe the date of 1670 on the wall, he must have been gathered to his fathers quite two centuries ago. Another very old inn, the "Eight Bells," still looks prosperous, at the corner of Castle Street, in which long thoroughfare the stranger, by dint of earnest enquiry, may find the shy retiring entrance to that delightful pleasaunce known as "Fry's Garden." I do not know who Fry was, but doubtless he was one of that famous Quaker

family, and certainly not only loved gardens, but created one here that in all the quaint circumstances of the formal walks, lawns, and terraces fashionable in the gardener's art of much more

HOUSE FORMERLY THE "SUN" INN.

than a century ago, has now become a treasure to the people of Walden, to whom he gave it.

There is little left of the great castle of Walden, the chief fortress of those Magnavilles, Earls of Essex, of whom Geoffrey, lord of a hundred and

seventeen manors in the troublous reigns of the Empress Maud and Stephen, was the third.

There is no more striking figure in the history of these East Anglian districts than that of this third Geoffrey. Not even Hereward, that earlier hero of the Fens, made a deeper impression; but while Hereward was a patriot, fighting the hopeless cause of his people, Geoffrey de Magnaville became a murderous bandit, whose hand was against every man. Succeeding to the family honours in 1130, he took up arms for the Empress Maud when England was plunged into Civil War between the rival claims of herself and Stephen, at the death of Henry I., in 1135; but he was arrested at St. Albans, his castles at Walden and Pleshey seized, and his high office of Constable of the Tower of London stripped from him.

Unfortunately for the welfare of this part of the kingdom, the mild policy of Stephen aimed at nothing more, and the broken Earl was set free. Some men take their misfortunes with a heroic calm, but Geoffrey de Magnaville was not of that kind. We are told how he "burst forth from the presence of the King like a riderless horse, kicking and biting," and so made for the Fens, where during a series of years, to the ruin of the realm, he made his armed support of Maud an excuse for giving full rein to his native ferocity. As robber and bandit, he was probably as much feared by those with whom he sided as by his opponents. The trembling clergy and peasantry knew him well, and feared him with

a deathly fear, for murder and sacrilege were his sport. By an easy twist of his name they came to know him as "Man-devil," which is in itself a kind of backhanded and sinister testimonial to his character, and long before he met his death he was placed by the outraged Church outside the pale of salvation. It was at Burwell, whose church tower stands prominently in the view from Newmarket Heath, his furrow came to an end, in 1144. It was time. He had for so long been the scourge of these wilds that at length the King made a determined effort to keep him in check by building a castle at Burwell and holding it in force. By this plan he hoped to keep that strenuous evil-doer shut up in his chosen haunt among the swamps of the Cam, where he might mudlark at will, and it was in attacking this castle, in an attempt to break through, he was mortally wounded by a bolt in the head, and died the next day at Mildenhall, eight miles distant, whither his fellow-outlaws had carried him. He died, in the language of that time, "excommunicate and unabsolved, nor was the earth suffered to give a grave to the sacrilegious offender." For twenty years, in fact, his body was unburied, remaining meanwhile soldered in lead, in an orchard belonging to the Templars in London. At the end of that time, upon some flimsy proof being given of his having in his last moments made some expressions of repentance, his spirit received absolution, and the body was buried beside that of his fathers in the Temple Church.

There, on the pavement, in company with seven others, his effigy may yet be seen, cross-legged and mailed. He wears a more than usually dour expression of countenance. His head is represented encased in a helmet in shape something midway between a saucepan and a frying-pan: possibly a rendering in stone of that headgear he wore at Burwell, and removed in the midst of that fray, to get the air, when the missile struck him.

This full-blooded scoundrel's keep, or robber's hold, stood upon an eminence known as Bury Hill. The massive walls, long since robbed of all architectural features, still show how securely he built, even though they are at this day only shapeless lumps of rubble. In one corner the stocks and pillory of Walden are still preserved.

It is a castle without a history. No one knows who destroyed it, and no tale has ever been told of those great earthworks, once connected with the fortress, which now, emerald green with luxuriant grass and spangled in springtime with wild flowers, once defended his market-town of Walden against surprise. These serried ranks of rampart and ditch were probably, like the hill on which he built his stronghold, much older than his time, and merely strengthened for the occasion, but they remain mystic to this day, and own a very large selection of names, being "Battle," "Repel," "Peddle," "Pell," and "Paigle" Ditches in the mouths of the country folk.

Walden, which owned but that single style

before it became in the long ago the seat of saffron culture, derives its name from "Weal-den," the wooded hollow, or perhaps "the hollow in the woods," and was anciently situated in the dense glades of the great Forest of Essex. When Geoffrey de Magnaville obtained the grant of a market for his town it became "Chipping," or Market Walden, and it was not until the reign of Edward III. that this style and title was changed for the name it now bears. The seal of the borough, dating

ARMS OF SAFFRON WALDEN.

from the time of Elizabeth, still alludes to that much-prized plant, and perpetrates the lamentable pun of three saffron flowers "walled in" by a castle; while the badge of the mayor's chain, made in 1873, repeats that hoary play upon words.

Saffron, long since disappeared from local ken, is said to have been introduced to England from Palestine so early as the times of the Crusaders, and to have been brought over, originally a single bulb, hidden in a palmer's staff. Its name is a corruption of the Arabic "sahafaran," but to

botanists it is *Crocus sativus*, the cultivated, as opposed to *Crocus agrestis*, the wild crocus. It was the supposed medicinal virtues of the plant that made it so much in request and so largely cultivated here in the latter part of the sixteenth century, when Fuller, writing of the town, speaks of it as one "which saffron may seem to have coloured with the name thereof." Those old curative properties are now quite disregarded, but they were once considered potent. The very least of the benefits it conferred was the exhilaration of the spirits, so that the old proverb for a merry fellow was "He hath slept in a bag of saffron," and Gerard, in his herbal, says: "The moderate use of it is good for the head, maketh the sences more quicke and lively, shaketh off heavie and drowsie sleepe, and maketh a man merrie." But other and more convivial things have long been found to produce the same results. While it was thought to relieve hysterical depression, it was good also for the small-pox. Placed in bags under the chins of sufferers from that fearful disease, it was supposed to bring on the eruptions, and so quickly relieve the patients. Fuller gives very emphatic testimony to its virtues. "Under God," he says, "I owe my life, when sick of the small-pox, to the efficacy thereof."

So beneficent a plant, of course, commanded a high price. In Fuller's time saffron sold at £3 a pound, and in 1665, the year of the Great Plague of London, it rose to £4 1*s*. 10*d*. Those were, by consequence, the times of saffron adulteration.

"No precious drug," he says, "is more adulterated with *cartamus*, the inward pilling of willow," and suggests that dealers should look carefully into the matter.

Of its high qualities he was, as we have seen, fully convinced, but another proof he advances, is not, to a sceptical modern world, altogether conclusive. The Age of Faith is past, but it was current in Fuller's era. *He*, at any rate, had the capacity for infinite belief, as we shall see. "In a word," he sums up, "the sovereign power of genuine saffron is plainly proved, for the crocodile's tears are never true, save when he is forced where saffron groweth (whence he hath his name of 'croco-deilos,' or the saffron-fearer), knowing himself to be all poison, and it all antidote." The logical conclusion of this belief would have been that wholesale saffron-buyers should have kept a staff of crocodiles as (so to speak) tasters, and by their tears, or the want of them, have gauged the purity of those purchases.

Hollingshead, writing of saffron cultivation, calls the farmers of it "crokers." It was a culture that must then have earned many a fortune, and so late as 1717 it was worth £1 6*s.* 6*d.* a pound; but, what with that curse of all industries, over-production, the carelessness of the growers, and shameless adulteration, price and quality declined. Then, too, the dependence of medicine upon the old herbalists began to decay, and the reputation of saffron fell off to such an extent that by 1790 it was no longer cultivated

at Walden, and the "crokers" were in another sense justified of their name.

Nowadays saffron is chiefly used as a colouring material for aromatic confections, for liqueurs and varnishes. Put in common cakes, that prove to have been made of something suspiciously like sawdust and pastĕ, the yellow hue it gives produces a specious and illusory richness only discovered too late.

XVI

We regain the high road at Littlebury, a rural village whose church is said to be built within the lines of a Roman encampment. It may be so, but the Eye of Faith is required to perceive any relics of it, although the natural hillock it stands upon, overlooking the river Cam, must be the "little bury" of the Saxon, once guarding the passage of that stream, and whose title has now crystallised into the place-name. Littlebury was the birthplace of Winstanley the cocksure and unfortunate designer of the Eddystone Lighthouse, who perished with the destruction of his building. The house where he was born was pulled down many years ago, and it is ill work questing for the site of it. Your ordinary villager is no hero-worshipper, and fails to understand such a search as this. His mind is evenly divided in speculating whether you be a fool or a rogue,

and all he has to say is, "I've lived here arl me loife, and niver hard tell on't. Pirraps they knaws him at the Post Orfice." But they don't.

The only person whom the present writer met at Littlebury who did know was stone deaf, and questions had to be put by the slow and cumbrous process of writing. The house stood on the right-hand side of the cross-road that goes from the church to the water-mill. Its site is now a little elm-covered mound in a meadow.

Passing from here along the river-bordered road, within sight of Little Chesterford, we leave Essex and come into Cambridgeshire, where the village of Great Chesterford is planted down on the further side of the river Cam. A gaunt fork of the roads here presents itself to the view, with an ugly inn at the parting of the ways, a shattered windmill to the left, on a hillside, and the railway running on to Cambridge through Great Chesterford station, with a forest of tall signal-posts outlined against the sky, and the puffings, snortings, and crashings of trains sounding continually, far into the night.

We do not merely leave the modern county of Essex and enter Cambridgeshire at this point, but change our soil as well, coming at once into a chalk country of bare and inhospitable downs, completely altering the nature of the road and keeping a forbidding solitude, without sign of the habitations of men, and only the occasional dull tinkle of a sheep-bell to hint even of farming interests.

Mark well this road onwards from Great Chesterford, for it is the line of the Icknield Way, and here, at the crossing of the Cam, we enter the one-time Iccnian kingdom, the territory of that great people whom Cæsar himself, in the name "Cenimagni" he gave them, called great. This country of the Iceni, comprising (to use that favourite word of the auctioneers) what we now know as Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, and Huntingdonshire, was a country pre-eminently distinguished from other parts of England by its ancient inaccessibility. We hear much in our own times of England's "splendid isolation," but within this island of Britain there was then, in this country of the Iceni, an isolation quite as thorough, if not so splendid; the river Stour and the oozy morasses spreading on its either banks dividing it most thoroughly from what we now call Essex, then a part of the nation of Trinobantes; and the whole of the western and north-western Icenian border was divided from the present Northants and Lincolnshire by the Ouse and the wide-spreading meres and morasses of the Fens. Only along the ridges of chalk downs stretching from Haverhill to Linton on the Essex border, or from Great Chesterford on to those other chalk downs of Royston was there any line of advance dryshod, and long lengths of those ridges were in those remote times covered with almost impenetrable woods. Thus the Icknield Way was the readiest, and almost only, route to or from the country of the Iceni, for friend or foe. It

led, this "Icen hilde weg," or *Via Iceniana*, out of the south-western parts of England, from the neighbourhood of Weymouth to Old Sarum, Marlborough, the Berkshire White Horse, East Ilsley, Dunstable, and Baldock, on to Royston and Ickleton, hard by this village of Great Chesterford we have now reached. It was never a made road, and in places branches out into several routes, but it was always the clearest of trackways, and owes its preservation over many miles to its course lying so greatly out of the way of agricultural operations, along the crests of the chalk hills, where the plough never comes and the faint footsteps of prehistoric man are undisturbed.

The existence of such a continuous track far out of the bounds of the Icenian realm, and the persistence among the peasantry of the different shires and counties of its old name under the transparent disguises of Hickling, Acheling, Hackney Way, and other variants, point not only to a considerable intercourse between the several peoples of this island, but also to the strong personality of the Iceni, who could thus imperishably impress their name on the long route, far from their own frontiers.

They were, however, at pains to protect themselves and that part of the Way which formed the entrance into their own country, and the traveller still sees, as he journeys on to Newmarket, the means they adopted to that end, in the various ditches and ramparts athwart the road. This

was the weakest part of their frontier, and thus it is that along these sixteen miles to Newmarket we find the way to have been barred by three strong earthworks, stretching on the one hand to the primeval forests on the hill-tops and on the other to the impassable fens. These are the Brent, or Pampisford Ditch, over two miles in length, between Abington Park and Pampisford; the Fleam, or Balsham Dyke, from the heights of Balsham to Fulbourn Fen and the Cam at Fen Ditton, nine miles long as the crow flies, but from its winding course some two miles longer; and that most famous of them all, the "Devil's Ditch," on Newmarket Heath, a seven miles' barrier stretching from Wood Ditton, or "Ditch End," to the fens at Reach.

The Icknield Way was thus well defended. It ran from Great Chesterford, partly along the course of the present road, to the neighbourhood of Newmarket, and thence into the heart of Suffolk and Norfolk to Norwich, the *Venta Icenorum* of the Romans. From Norwich its course is uncertain, but it is thought to have made for Yarmouth. Newmarket had not in those days come into existence, but the village of Exning, two miles from that town, marks the site of an ancient settlement. From Newmarket the Way becomes more difficult to trace, but it seems to have gone by Kentford, and to have crossed the Lark at Lackford. Thence over the high grounds of Icklingham Heath, by Old Elveden Gap, to Thetford, it is readily

found, in a green track that may be followed for miles.

Not every East Anglian village whose name begins with Ick or Ix can claim to mark this principal line of communication. There are the twin villages of Icklingham St. James and Icklingham All Saints, and there are Ickworth, near Bury St. Edmunds, with Ixworth, Ixworth Thorpe, and Ickburgh in other parts of Norfolk and Suffolk, but they merely show those people to have been widely settled in the land, and that the Way, although their principal track, was by no means the only one.

Here, at Great Chesterford, where the bare swooping downs fall into the valley of the Cam—here, or at the neighbouring village of Ickleton—the Iceni would seem to have had a frontier town, and when the Romans so masterfully subjugated them, that conquering people established beside this little river their fortified post of *Iciani*, or, as some antiquaries would have it, *Camboritum*.

Whichever of those two places it really was, it is quite certain a post was established here. The adjoining fields have, time and again, yielded treasures in Roman coins and articles of bronze, gold, and brass, and skeletons, perhaps those of the owners of these finds, have been unearthed. Great Chesterford, perhaps once really great, is now quite a small place, but keeps its annual July fair, even though its market, dating from some time before Domesday Book, has long

since decayed. The only sign of modern life in the village at this day is the new roller flour-mill by the Cam, using the electric light. Along the village street, a large, prominent red-brick house with an imposing portico, now in private occupation, is pointed out as the once important "Crown" coaching inn and posting-house, and on the opposite side of the road another private house, formerly the "Waggon and Horses," is shown by the villagers.

XVII

It is a fine road that leads from Great Chesterford to Newmarket, partly on the line of the old Icknield Way. Ickleton and Hinxton, two neighbouring villages, are seen down in the distance, on the left hand, as the road climbs steadily over the chalk downs: pleasant villages in the valley of the Cam, with brilliantly white-washed cottages showing prominently from their setting in green pastures.

This is a no mere track over the downs, but a well-made highway, embanked in the hollow and cut through the rises. Where it has finally left the village of Great Chesterford and has begun the climb, at the several branching roads still known as "Stump Cross"—although that stump of a wayside cross has long since disappeared—you may look, on the left-hand road to

Cambridge by way of Sawston, for the Deserted Railway. This is the abandoned line of the Newmarket and Chesterford Railway Company, incorporated in 1846 for the purpose of constructing a railway in double track from the Eastern Counties' station at Great Chesterford to Newmarket. The undertaking was purchased and opened April 4th, 1848, by the Eastern Counties (now the Great Eastern), but abandoned in 1852, as between Great Chesterford and Six Mile Bottom, on the opening of the existing line from Six Mile Bottom to Cambridge. The result is that the present railway journey between Great Chesterford and Newmarket is necessarily through Cambridge, and describes two sides of a triangle, as you may readily discover by consulting a railway map. The abandoned railway forming the third side of the triangle, would have gone direct, but it was discovered, somewhat late in the day, that there was not sufficient traffic to support both routes, and so the rails of this particular one were torn up and the line abandoned. Twelve miles of deserted track have thus for over half a century borne witness to the otherwise incredible folly of those early railway projectors, who flung away close on £150,000 upon a line that was not wanted.

It begins at Great Chesterford as an embankment, overgrown with brambles and undergrowth, but presently sinks to the level at the crossing of the road to Sawston and Cambridge, and in the fields on either side has been ploughed out of

existence. Where the trains once went, turnips and clover now grow; but the embankment rises again in the distance and looks remarkably like another, and an even more gigantic, earthwork of unknown age. It is singular, indeed, that in this district of prehistoric dykes a modern rival should be thus added for the confusion of antiquaries who may even yet, in the remote future, come to speculate learnedly upon it, to discuss by what tribe it was made or whose kingdom it divided. It is quite as impressive as the Devil's Ditch, even although we know perfectly well that navvies, and not the Devil, made it. Neighbouring the road all the way to Six Mile Bottom, it sometimes drops into deep cuttings, with the bridges still spanning them, and again resumes as a lofty embankment, often shrouded in the fir plantations that in the course of half a century have developed into dense woods. It ends at last on the level at Six Mile Bottom.

XVIII

That cyclist whose way lies in the eye of the wind along these miles to or from Newmarket is greatly to be pitied, for few sheltering plantations break the force of the howling gales that sweep the stark hillsides. But when the summer sun of a still July afternoon shines mellow upon this country of infinite distances—why, then the

way of the pilgrim is made easy, and he can better appreciate a road whose bleakness, when overtaken by rain or night, or struggling against adverse winds, he remembers with horror.

Here we pass the Brent Ditch, going solitary across the unfenced, uncultivated grassy downs, and come to the equally solitary Cambridge and Haverhill Railway that runs in single track in a deep cutting across the road. You see Pampisford station down below as you pass by, and a railway inn, and that is all. If you linger on the bridge and await the coming of a train, you will see it stop, and the station-master and one porter, awakened out of their slumber, like Sleeping Beauties, come yawning on to the platform to meet the passengers who do not alight and to assist into the train those who do not put in an appearance.

A little way beyond this lonely spot, at the cross-roads by Bourn Bridge, where the Bourn, or Linton River, flows across the highway, there stood a once well-known posting-house and coaching-inn, the "King's Arms." It was demolished, for lack of business, many years since, and only a row of cottages on the left hand, once forming part of the stables, now remains, with the embankment of the Deserted Railway, the cause of the inn's decay, and itself long ago abandoned, at the rear.

Still lonelier grows the road as we proceed, attaining the height of detachment from the busy world at a point near the forty-eighth mile from

London, where the road between Cambridge and Little Abington crosses our route. This is the Roman road known to antiquaries as the *Via Devana*, a name coined by them for it, to describe its course diagonally through England from Colchester to Chester, the *Deva* of the Romans. It leads on the left hand to Cambridge, six miles away, over the Gog Magog Hills, the Cambridgeshire "moun-

"MAG'S MOUNT."

tains," on whose not remarkably high crest the Roman camp of Vandlebury can still be traced. Ancient roads are the merest commonplaces of this route to Newmarket, and we have gone little more than another mile when another is reached, crossing again at right angles. This is a way, much more ancient than the Romans, known as "Worstead Street," and thought to have been the "War-stead," or path, of some ancient people,

perhaps the Iceni. This also leads, as a made road, on the left, to Cambridge; but its continuation to the right hand is now nothing more than a grassy track.

This junction of roads is peculiarly impressive, and bites deeply into the imagination. A solitary farmhouse on one side of the cross-roads, an equally solitary cottage on the other, a long length of old malt-houses topping the rise, and the eerie bulk of "Mag's Mount," crowned with spindly firs, and with a deep cutting of the Deserted Railway scarring its chalky shoulder: all these combine to fix the spot in the recollection, although no story belongs to it and no one knows who was "Mag" of the Mount that bears his name.

In another two miles the Fleam Dyke, or Balsham Ditch, is reached, almost as perfect now as when first dug, but in places overgrown with trees, especially to the left hand, where a prehistoric *tumulus* called Matlow Hill commands it. Ahead, along the rising and dipping road, the paltry wayside settlement of Six Mile Bottom comes in sight, distinguished by the very busy and scandalously dangerous level crossing at the railway station, where a frequent service of express trains dashing through at high speed is a menace to life and a hindrance to users of the highway.

Plantations in thick continuous fringes or belts here begin to shield the road from the tempestuous winds, and shut out the empty downs, whose inhospitable nature seems to be reflected in the name

of Westley Waterless, a lonely village marked on the map in their midst.

At last, passing by outlying trainers' establishments, the neighbourhood of Newmarket is heralded by the great grassy bank, some thirty feet in height, which looms before the wayfarer as he climbs a rise. The road, and a road coming from Cambridge, pass through a cleft in this great barrier, and under the lee of the opening nestles an old toll-house. To the left, across a breezy open space stretching away for miles, goes this grassy earthwork, rising and falling with the inequalities of the ground, and with a yawning ditch accompanying it into the dim perspective. A grey church tower is seen in the middle distance, and on the far horizon, gleaming white in occasional sunbursts, or looming blackly under cloud effects, is an architectural Something that dominates the whole scene. We are, in short, come to the Devil's Ditch and Newmarket Heath. That is Burwell church, showing greyly amid surrounding clumps of trees, three miles away, and that architectural city of dream on the horizon, reflecting through the opalescent haze of the Fens, across the intervening marshes of Wicken and Soham, is St. Etheldreda's own refuge of Ely, whose giant cathedral, islanded thirteen miles away amid the bogs and meres, shines from afar, like a good deed in a naughty world.

THE DEVIL'S DITCH AND NEWMARKET HEATH, LOOKING TOWARDS ELY.

XIX

The first mention of the Devil's Ditch is found in the Saxon Chronicle, in the year 905, when this land of the East Angles was described as laid waste by the northmen between the "Dyke" and the Ouse. It was under the Saxons that it was first imputed to the Father of Lies, whose name it still bears, and to whose strenuous labour, in the open-mouthed astonishment of those simple people, amazed at the many such gigantic earthworks they found in the land, they ascribed almost every other such remarkable object. The Normans, in a later age, not so credulous, knew it as St. Edmund's Dyke; the jurisdiction of the Abbots of St. Edmundsbury extending thus far westward.

But this famous line of defence—for such it is—had really a less distinguished authorship. The Iceni, who at the time of the Roman conquest were a very much more civilised people than the Saxons of five hundred years later, constructed it as the rearward and strongest of the several such ramparts and ditches they had thrown across this only easy line of advance of a possible enemy into their country. A popular idea of the Iceni is that they were like the Picts of North Britain, who painted themselves a sky-blue, and considered that full dress. But they were far more advanced than anything so nearly allied to the ideals of the Garden of

Eden, and would no more have owned kin even with such earlier inhabitants of their own East Anglia as the neolithic men, than we would stoop to call cousins with the gorillas. They had advanced beyond the condition of patriarchal communities and roving tribes, and had passed the intermediate stage of barter, to enter the more civilised one of a nation with a money currency and coin of its own. Icenian coins, in gold and silver, are well known to numismatists, and although the design on them, said by experts to be intended to represent a horse, is difficult to be recognised, still they *are* coins.

This figure of a horse occurring so constantly on these coins has sometimes led antiquaries to the ingenious conclusion that the neighbourhood of Newmarket, even thus early, was famous for horses, but that is a long shot, and very much in the dark.

A people of their calibre must have been quite capable of such military works as these dykes. This was their best effort and still speaks well for their energy. The ditch, on the western side, clearly showing that the work was a defence from dangers expected from that quarter, is twenty feet deep, and the bank, reared up in an acute angle, thirty feet above the level of the ground, thus presents a formidable climb, in all, of fifty feet. Add to these difficulties offered to an invader, the strong probability that the crest of the rampart was defended by a timber palisade, and we can clearly perceive that when

these defences were manned by a determined people, the invasion of the Icenian country must have been a hazardous enterprise.

For seven miles the Ditch runs, from the waters of the Cam at Reach to the woods on the chalk hills of Wood Ditton. It is possible to walk along the summit of the bank most of the way, for, although rough and uneven pedestrian exercise, it is in general eighteen feet in breadth, and remarkably like an abandoned railway embankment. It is one of the many sites identified as the scene of Boadicea's defeat by Suetonius Paulinus, but we are sceptical of this particular one, although the ancient tumulus on the outer face of the Ditch, still called the Two Captains, points to some forgotten conflict in which two leaders were slain and buried on the contested field.

Little is now left of this once prominent mound, once important enough to be marked on Ordnance maps, but now ploughed nearly flat. It stands in the third field from the road, on the right hand, a field now under corn, but until forty years ago a wood.

XX

NEWMARKET HEATH is a large place. It is easily possible to ramble on it quite away from any sight or sound of the races and the race crowds, and to

find a solitude in its midst while eight thousand people are shouting themselves hoarse in cheering a popular winner. While the October meetings are in progress on one side of the Heath, the July Course, on the other, under the shadow of the "Devil's Ditch," is a voiceless solitude. You would almost think that the Iceni, who dug the Ditch, had planned the Course, and built the Stand on it as well, so deserted of the world they look.

Nothing can be more dreary than the sight of this simple race-stand. Built to hold a thousand people, here it squats, an emptiness; the only sounds those in the long sombre belt of firs, whose branches sway with a sound of the sea in the airs that sweep the breezy Heath.

Newmarket is first mentioned in 1227, when it seems to have been established in consequence of an epidemic raging at the mother-parish of Exning, about two miles away. This "old market" of Exning, now a village, owes its name, say some, to the Iceni, but it is much more likely to have derived from the Celtic word "Exe," for water, for the springs there are a feature of the place. That phenomenally pious lady, St. Etheldreda, one of the daughters of King Anna, and foundress of Ely Cathedral, was born at Exning, and there, we are asked to believe, was anciently a great horse-fair, to which Newmarket can trace its origin as Metropolis of the Turf.

But Newmarket did not come into prominence until the reign of James I., who loved its wild surroundings for the sake of the coursing they

gave. It was for hunting the hare and the bustard, and for the sport of hawking, rather than for horse-racing, that Newmarket first became favoured. It was not long, however, before the sportsmen who surrounded James discovered that on the elastic turf of the Heath they had an ideal running-ground for horses, far better than that of the several places where matches were already being made, and racing very soon occupied the foremost place. King James was a frequent visitor, and was the first to establish a palace here, and here, in after-years, Charles I. was brought as a prisoner.

Newmarket was under a cloud of neglect during the Commonwealth, for under Puritan rule horse-racing was forbidden, but with the Restoration its fortunes grew bright. There was never a more ardent turfite than Charles II., who was continually visiting Newmarket, and maintained here a dissolute Court that shocked even some contemporaries.

Evelyn, the diarist, in 1671 "found the jolly blades racing, dancing, feasting, and revelling, more resembling a luxurious and abandoned rout than a Christian Court. The Duke of Buckingham was now in mighty favour, and had with him that impudent woman, the Countess of Shrewsbury, with his band of fiddlers."

That was a very poor indictment. Much more might have been said of a Court which included Louise de la Quérouaïlle, afterwards created Duchess of Portsmouth, Nell Gwynne, and

numerous others of their stamp. The wholesale and unblushing—nay, boastful—immorality of that Court is amazing; and still more amazing is the historical condonation of viciousness that has made Nell Gwynne a heroine. The origin of Nell, whose name popular usage has spelt as above, but which seems to have been originally written "Gwyn," is almost as vague as that of Homer. Seven cities have claimed that old Greek as a native. Nell, whose name speaks her Welsh origin, was born in three places: Hereford, Oxford, and the Coalyard, Drury Lane. Reared in the foulest slums, and the common property of quite a number of persons, she yet became the favourite of a King, the mother of a Duke, and the grandmother of a Bishop. One feels sorry for that dignitary of the Church.

Charles, Lord Buckhurst, was the man who made her over to Charles II. It was quite a businesslike transaction, and his price was the step in the Peerage that made him Earl of Dorset. But that was not the first change of proprietors, for an earlier love had been Charles Hart, an actor. Her new protector, the King, she therefore spoke of as *her* Charles the third. That is a well-known story, how she procured a title for her boy. "Come here, you little bastard!" she called the child in presence of his father, the King. Charles was shocked at the coarseness of the expression, but she was prepared with a retort. "That is the only name I have to give the poor boy," she said. As a result of this, the boy was

christened Charles Beauclerk, created Earl of Burford in 1676, and Duke of St. Albans 1684.

Newmarket, with a licentious and idle Court seeking only to be amused, was in the time of Charles II. as distinguished for eccentric wagers and sporting feats as Brighton in after-centuries under the protection of the Prince Regent. Lord Digby in 1670 staked £50 that he would walk five miles in an hour, stark naked and barefoot, and had the mortification of losing by the narrow margin of half a minute. Charles and a great crowd of courtiers were present. They all had "something on," as well as clothes, but whether they backed my Lord Digby or not we are not told.

Then there was Captain John Gibbs, a gambler and racing-man of the same period, who laid a wager of £500 that he would drive his light chaise and four horses up and down the steepest part of the Devil's Ditch, and won it, "to the surprise of all the spectators." He performed the feat by making a very light chaise with a jointed perch and without any pole. The hero of that occasion lies buried in Attleborough Church, with a long set of eulogistic verses over him, which do not, however, refer to any of his sporting exploits. He died, it seems, October 22nd, 1695, forty-eight years of age.

A sporting event of much later date and not quite so extravagant a nature was Captain Robert Barclay of Ury's sixty-four miles' walk from Suffolk Street, Pall Mall, to Newmarket, on a hot July day in 1803. He accomplished that

feat in ten hours. This famous pedestrian, son of another Robert Barclay, who once walked the 510 miles from London to Ury in ten days, was the hero of many such sporting performances, and in 1809 walked 1,000 miles on the Heath

BARCLAY OF URY ON HIS WALKING MATCH.

in 1,000 consecutive hours. He was thirty years of age at the time. On Wednesday, May 31st, he began what was then regarded as "the most remarkable feat ever recorded in the annals of pedestrianism," concluding it on Wednesday, July 12th, at 3.37 p.m., in the presence

of 10,000 spectators, with twenty-three minutes to spare. The wager (for no one in those days did anything without wagering) was for 1,000 guineas a side. It was supposed that not less than 100,000 guineas changed hands among those 10,000 onlookers. His mile average the first week was 14 min. 54 sec. During the last week it fell to 21 min. 4 sec., and his weight was reduced from 13 stone 4 lb. to 11 stone. This performance was undertaken without any training, and so does not compare on even terms with those of Edward Payson Weston, the American pedestrian, who, at the beginning of 1878, walked 1,000 miles in 398 hrs. 19 min., at the Cricket Ground, Newcastle-on-Tyne, and out of those 398 hours rested altogether 150 hrs. $38\frac{1}{2}$ min. Weston, who improved even on this by walking $1{,}977\frac{1}{2}$ miles in 1,000 hours along the roads, at the beginning of 1879, trained continually.

Another famous sporting item of this period was Abraham Wood's forty miles running match on Newmarket Heath, on April 16th, 1807. The stake was 500 guineas, and the performance was to be concluded in five hours. Wood, who was a native of Mildrew, in Lancashire, and considered, as an athlete, second only to Captain Barclay, completed the forty miles in four minutes under the five hours. He ran the first eight miles in 48 minutes, and the first twenty in 2 hours 7 minutes.

The Palace built by James I., and rebuilt by

Charles II., long continued in use. James II. was too busy striving to dragoon the nation into Roman Catholicism, to take much interest in the races, but William III. was often here.

That grim and silent monarch does not bulk largely as a sportsman in the minds of most people, yet he was a supporter of Newmarket, and we actually find him in October, 1689, the year after his accession, performing the extraordinarily quick journey of Hampton Court to Newmarket in one day, a feat then rightly considered surprising. He figures on one occasion as a reckless, unlucky, and infuriated plunger at cards. It was in 1689 that he lost 4,000 guineas overnight at basset, at one sitting. The next morning, still chafing at the loss, he gave a gentleman a stroke with his horsewhip for riding before him on the race-ground. It was rather an unfortunate outburst of temper, for from it arose the sarcasm that it was the only blow he had struck for supremacy in his kingdoms.

Anne and the first two Georges were familiar with the place, but towards the close of George III.'s reign the Palace was sold. The Prince Regent, however, took a keen interest in racing, and ran a rather crooked course on the Turf, for he was practically warned off the Heath by the Jockey Club, that autocratic body of racing law-givers whose rules no one, from a jockey to a king, dare transgress. In such a world as that of racing, which it would be mere affectation to contend is followed in the main for purely

sporting reasons, unmixed with the hope of gain, stringent and inflexible laws and exemplary punishments are necessary for the protection of all concerned.

Like many another institution with small beginnings and unexpected growth, the Jockey Club emerges only in dim fashion from the past, and historians can only say that it was established somewhere in the reign of George II., between 1727 and 1760. Nowadays that body is all-powerful, not alone at Newmarket, but in the whole world of racing, whose events are conducted under its rules. The Heath itself is the Club's unchallenged domain, for it is rented of the free-holder, the Duke of Portland, and its gallops are opened or closed just as the officials will it. The revenue of the Club, too, is enormous, for every jockey pays for a licence, and the fees exacted from owners at every turn, and the money taken for admission to the betting-rings and enclosures, total an income more than princely. The head-quarters of the Club and Tattersall's Rooms combined face the High Street in no very imposing manner, and the pavement in front of them becomes on race-days the Rialto of owners and trainers.

XXI

The history of the Jockey Club and that of "Tattersalls" are inseparable. Richard, the first

Tattersall, born in 1724, and originally stud-groom to the Duke of Kingston, founded the well-known business of horse-auctioneering in London in 1766, and prospered from the beginning of that enterprise; but his fortune was made rather in horse-breeding, and "Old Tatt" had his first great success in 1779, when he bought Highflyer, Lord Bolingbroke's famous racehorse, for £2,500, and put him to the stud. It is a proof of his tried and proved integrity that he purchased Highflyer on credit.

But Highflyer himself demands a few words here. He was a bay horse, foaled in 1774, the property of Sir Charles Bunbury, who sold him to Lord Bolingbroke. He won a long succession of classic races at Newmarket in 1777-79, and was in after-years the sire of many equally famous horses. In fact, as in the case of "Eclipse first, the rest nowhere," of later times, Highflyer stood for all that was fleetest and finest in his own day, and it was from him that the stage-coach proprietors of old delighted to name their conveyances. We find no "Highflyer" coach, however, on this road, but a well-known London and Edinburgh "Highflyer" coach ran from 1788 to 1840, and at least five other local coaches of the same name travelled the cross-roads of Yorkshire, that shire most famous of all for the love of horses.

Highflyer in thirteen years brought Tattersall such prosperity that he was able to set up a fine establishment at New Barns, or "Highflyer

Hall," Ely, and to entertain the greatest in the land with a baronial hospitality. The New Barns port was said to be the best in England, and was very potent. Richard Tattersall, grandson of "Old Tatt," who himself lived to be known as "Old Dick," used to tell how, in 1794, as a boy of nine, he saw a post-chaise from his grandfather's place drive up to the "Palace" door at Newmarket, with William Windham, the statesman, riding a leader and Charles Fox awheel, while the Prince of Wales, too greatly overcome with New Barns port to take part in the frolic, or even to sit on the seat, lay utterly helpless on the floor of the chaise.

Tattersall was not only powerful at Newmarket, but popular as well; and in those days, when highwaymen infested all the roads leading into this place where money flowed so freely, was the only man who could with impunity go back and forth, unattended and unarmed, with his pockets full of gold. The highwaymen declared him "free of the road." On the one occasion when he actually was stopped and relieved of his treasure, it was the work of one who did not recognise him, and restitution was made when his identity was discovered. Not every one, although perhaps rejoiced to share this highway franchise, would feel altogether complimented by this more than fraternal affection of those knights of the crape mask and horse-pistol, for it argued a community of interests.

By the time the Jockey Club and Tattersall's came into existence, Newmarket had become too

firmly established as the headquarters of racing for any greater or less measure of Royal favour to affect its fortunes. Wealth, quite irrespective of birth and rank, now counts. It is all one to the town and the trainers who provides the funds, whether it be a millionaire Austrian Jew banker, a German Israelitish financier, a rack-renting peer-landlord, a monarch of the licensed victualling trade, or a wholesale furnisher from Tottenham Court Road; and when the bacon-kings and the sovereigns of soup, and all the other geniuses of the factory and the Exchange, who pile up huge fortunes out of the labour of others, come here to spend a percentage of their hoards, they will be all sure of the same welcome—as why should they not?

There is little or no snobbery in Newmarket, and it is perhaps the only place in the world where the King can depend upon being let alone. He can walk the High Street or the race-course like any other sportsman, or look into the shop-windows without being mobbed. Here, at any rate, Addresses are never presented, and Royalty walks, for a change, upon pavements and mother earth, without the usual intermediary of red carpet. No one—at least none who are conversant with the manners and customs of the place—even takes off a hat to the Sovereign, who is thereby relieved from his invariable courtesy of returning the salute. In short, no one takes the least notice of him.

XXII

The cemetery at Newmarket is the traveller's melancholy introduction to this town of gay memories. It acts the part of that oft-quoted ancient Egyptian custom of seating a skeleton at the feast; for those who go to and from the race-course, and the budding jockeys who daily exercise the horses on the Bunbury or others of the Heath gallops, can scarce fail to see it and its serried ranks of grandiose white marble monuments. It must inevitably be dispiriting to some, for it emphasises the shortness of our course, enacts the *rôle* of mentor, and seems to hint, "Why toil and moil and live laborious days, and why in that toiling stoop to petty meannesses, when at last—and at no distant date—you too must lie with the many racing celebrities of a bygone day, as forgotten as they?" In some sort the roadside cemeteries that now so dolefully are set in the gates of every town *may* thus be a moral force—although that is to be doubted—but certainly their suggestions of the fleeting nature of life and the essential futility of it are alien from public policy, as likely to sap the energy of the race. The time must needs come, and that soon, when cremation is made compulsory and the wayside cities of the dead abolished.

The humble gravestone is scarcely to be found in this enclosure. Nothing less than a marble cross will serve the turn of the owners, the trainers, and the jocks who are bedded down

here. Captain Machell, a Turf celebrity of later years, lies nearest the gate of any: they say at Newmarket he wished to lie close to the road, near the wall on whose other side the horses go on their morning gallops throughout the year. So unfailingly does sentiment rule, even here!

A racing-man could take you through these groves of ornate monuments and thoroughly perform the part of a horsey "Who's Who," but the majority of the names mean nothing to the outside public. One, however, you may read that means much to our generation; it is the name of Archer. Even that section of the public uninterested in horse-racing was familiar with the name and fame of Archer in his life, and in his death he still retains a hold upon the popular imagination. Fred Archer in the early '80's was to the racing world what the Prime Minister is in the world of English politics, the Archbishop of Canterbury in matters ecclesiastical, and the President of the Royal Academy in the domain of Art: was, indeed, more to his world than they to theirs, for he occupied his foremost place by sheer merit, and it is not commonly the ablest statesmen, the most pious divines, or the most gifted of painters who are thus elevated above their especial spheres of activity.

It was no shame, even to the most puritanical, to know who Archer was. "Archer up!" became a synonym for success at the time when he flourished. And how he did flourish! He was but twenty-nine years of age when he died,

but had long been world-famous. Born at Cheltenham in 1857, the son of a jockey turned publican, he scored his first win on Atholl Daisy, at Chester, September 28th, 1870. In 1872 he won the Cesarewitch, and in 1874 the Two Thousand Guineas, on Lord Falmouth's Atlantic. From that time forth he was the foremost jockey, and was so successful that he became a superstition with backers. To his skilful and daring riding fell such remarkable successes as the Derby and St. Leger in 1877, and in 1885 the Derby, Oaks, Grand Prix, St. Leger, and Two Thousand Guineas. In the whole of his career he rode to victory no fewer than 2,748 winners; a record no other jockey has approached. His riding weight was 8 stone 10 lbs. In earnings and presents he is said to have made over £60,000 in those fourteen years that comprised his career. Archer's monument is a large white marble cross, carved at the crossing with a spray of roses in high relief, and on the plinth with a rose in full bloom, represented as though having fallen from the spray. It was originally erected by him to his wife, as may be gathered from the inscription :—

"In Sacred Memory of Helen Rose, the beloved wife of Frederick James Archer, who passed away November 7th, 1884, aged 23 years.

For ever with the Lord,
Amen, so let it be:
Life from the dead is in that word,
'Tis immortality.

Also their infant son, William, January 9th, 1884.

In Sacred Memory of Frederick James Archer, who passed away November 8th, 1886, aged 29 years.

"In the midst of life we are in death."

From the gates of this melancholy place one looks down along the whole length of Newmarket High Street. Looking backward, you see the Heath, with the long trail of the road, and the gradually diminishing line of telegraph-poles seen at so acute an angle that they give almost the impression of a close-set palisade: no place so excellent as this for the purpose of instructing the young idea into the meaning of perspective.

The Heath comes up to the very doors of the town, whose broad void street is stretched out there as though it were some Sleepy Hollow whose inhabitants were drowsing away an empty life. But no greater mistake could possibly be made: there are no more wide-awake people in the world than here. Even at Doncaster, where the St. Leger keeps the minds of the Yorkshire tykes whetted to the keenest edge, there are not sharper folks.

A race-day during the July or Houghton Meeting makes a very different picture. Special trains have by midday brought thousands of sportsmen from London and elsewhere, and the great mansions in the town, usually closed, are filled with gay parties. Every public-house does a roaring trade, and the street is thronged with

an astonishing number of cabs and every variety of fly and victoria, whose drivers are all extravagantly eager to drive you to the course. Whence those vehicles come might form an interesting subject of speculation. Stalls for the sale of all manner of possible and impossible things form a continuous line along that broad thoroughfare. Even uncooked pork sausages are offered for sale, but what the class of people who flock into Newmarket for half a day are supposed to want with them it is difficult to conceive. The Newmarket sportsman is scarcely the kind of person who might be expected to carry a pound or so of pork sausages with him on to the course, or on his lap, going home.

In addition to all these stalls and booths, the sellers of "race cards" are much in evidence, and a long procession of men with that characteristic equipment of the racing-man, the field-glasses slung over the shoulders, winds slowly up the long way to the Stand. These are devotees of the great goddess Chance, who, like Justice, is blind. They do not hurry, because they have often trod the same path: they are neither joyful nor gloomy, but just stolid and businesslike, because they have come this way with such a succession of varied fortune that they take gain or loss with unchanged demeanour and equal fortitude, and when they return you shall seek in vain to guess the luck of the day from their unemotional countenances.

The racing is all done by 3.30 p.m., and in

another hour the course is clear, the town empty of strangers. But the inns are filled with stable-folk and the many nondescript hangers-on of a great racing centre. As the evening wears away even the inns clear, and at ten o'clock all is quiet, except perhaps for a painful orchestra of three itinerant musicians playing injuriously outside the "Black Bear." A drizzly rain falls and the musicians disperse, greatly to the relief of the ear that listens, not so much because it would as because it must. Newmarket's race-day is done, and the cats make love, undisturbed, in the porticoes. Only within the mansions of the great is the excitement of the day continued, and there they play bridge until morning glints greyly through the shutters.

XXIII

THE houses of this broad street are curiously irregular. Great palatial mansions alternate with humble taverns; the busy "White Hart" stands next door to the Duke of Devonshire's house, and shops elbow other imposing residences of the great. On the right hand, as you enter the town, is the large red-brick pile of Queensberry House, built a few years ago by Lord Wolverton, and at first styled "Ugly House," from a successful racehorse of that name; and everywhere in the town its

YARD OF THE "WHITE HART," NEWMARKET.

turfy sympathies are declared in the villas christened with titles that mean much to those versed in turf history. The customary "Elms," "Limes," and "Montserrats" of villadom here give place to "Bend Or," "St. Gatien," and other horsey mottoes.

But the town has every reason to regret the past. In days before railways, a race-meeting meant these great establishments being occupied for days at a time; now it is easily possible to return comfortably to London in the evening, they are often in use only for a few hours, and many have long been to let. Where the Palace stood, a Congregational Chapel and a row of shops front the street.

The churches—St. Mary's on the Suffolk and All Saints' on the Cambridgeshire side—are, on the other hand, quite humble buildings, and tucked away out of sight in most apologetic fashion, as though in this Metropolis of the Turf religion were bidden take a back place. Cynic circumstance has decreed that the best—and, indeed, almost the only—view of St. Mary's, the most important of the two buildings, is that gained from the yard of that eminently sporting and horsey inn, the "White Hart." From that point it certainly does contribute to a fine picture, although its tapering spire, with the clock-bell placed in a little hutch on one side of the tower, is quaint, rather than pretty or intrinsically striking. It stands in a damp little churchyard, closely hemmed in by narrow streets and lanes, with several very old

tombstones inserted in the buttresses; among them one of a seventeenth-century actor of the Theatre Royal, Newmarket, who in jaundiced tones and the most gruesome spelling, tells us that life is fleeting and we shall be as he, and so forth. The old hunks! Sorry himself to leave the stage of life, he made his exit with that cheering reflection that the curtain must presently be rung down on the whole company.

It is a dark church within, and with little to reward the pilgrim; but a curious relic exhibited in a frame on the north wall is interesting. It is a small purse, found in 1857, during the rebuilding of the south wall of the chancel. In the course of those operations two debased windows and an Early English piscina were found. On the top of the piscina was the purse, of faded white silk, with large tassels, and containing three Reichening pfennigs or Nuremburg jettons, specimens of the well-known counters or tokens made in the first part of the sixteenth century by Hans Schultz, of Nuremburg. They bear on one side the device of the Reichs apple within a trefoil, and on the reverse an heraldic rose, surrounded by crowns and fleurs-de-lis. They and the purse all date from about 1500. A purse of this character is generally represented in sacred heraldry as the receptacle of the thirty pieces of silver, the reward of Judas's betrayal. Maundy money was distributed in purses of this pattern, so late as the reign of Charles II.

Near by is a tablet to the memory of a Rector,

who died in his thirtieth year, in 1681. His epitaph tells us, "Here lie the mortal remains of R. Cooke, late Rector of this parish, whose tongue or life I know not which was the most eloquent." He exerted himself so much while preaching that he broke a blood-vessel, and died in the pulpit. "Thus," concludes the epitaph, somewhat extravagantly, "he poured out his life-blood for the Gospel."

The Church of All Saints, at the other side of the High Street, and in Cambridgeshire, was wholly rebuilt, as a memorial to Colonel Lord George John Manners, of Cheveley Park, in 1876. It is interesting only because of the small black marble tablet, about the size of a pocket-handkerchief, to the memory of Tregonwell Frampton, which was on the chancel wall of the old church, but has been shouldered away in the new building to the darkness of so high a position on the wall of the tower that the inscription cannot be read without the aid of a ladder. Frampton, who came of a race of landed proprietors in Dorsetshire, was "Father of the Turf," and, as the inscription on the tablet states, "Keeper of the Running Horses to their Sacred Majesties, William the Third, Anne, George the First and Second." He died, considerably over eighty years of age, in 1727, and thus ended a remarkable career of bold and eventful gambling in his youth, variegated by a later course as trainer for those four monarchs. For that is what the phrase, "Keeper of the Running Horses," means. Historians of racing

are even yet uncertain as to the truth of the grave charge made against him of mutilating the famous horse Dragon, in order to qualify him technically for a particular race, the evidence against him not being sufficiently convincing. The year of this alleged offence was 1682. It seems scarce credible that he would afterwards have occupied that position of trust with William III. and the three succeeding sovereigns had there been any foundation for the charge.

XXIV

Modern Newmarket is typified by that showy giant barrack-hotel, the "Victoria," not long since completed, and in its glitter and electric light an ostentatious sign of these thriving times of new-made wealth and new-born social ambitions. The older Newmarket, of days when wealth alone could not purchase rank and the *entrée* to society, is represented by the "Rutland Arms," appropriately staid and severe in its architectural style, and perhaps, like the older order it embodies, a little under the cloud of neglect. The great "Rutland Arms" has, any time these one hundred and forty years past, been the resort of the more aristocratic patrons of Newmarket, and, looking back upon the town from the Bury road, it is still the chief feature of the place. Built around a courtyard, on

NEWMARKET: THE "RUTLAND ARMS."

solid early Georgian lines, of dull red brick and with high-pitched roof, it makes no pretensions to beauty, and yet does succeed in giving an impression of majesty and repose. Its noble rooms are large enough to permit of walking exercise, and instead of the exiguous cubicles, miscalled bedrooms, of modern hotels, you have sleeping apartments whose dimensions might almost be expressed in the measurements of a surveyor rather than in the less generous formula of the foot-rule. The "Rutland Arms'" sign owes its existence here to the fact that the manor of Newmarket came into the Manners family in the reign of George II., by the marriage of the daughter of the sixth Duke of Somerset with John Marquis of Granby in 1750. This was that famous "Markis o' Granby" who earned such military distinction in Germany and such popularity at home that his name became for many years one of the most popular of inn signs. The Manners family until recent years owned the property, together with the neighbouring park of Cheveley, and their coat-of-arms on a gigantic scale, blazoned in blue and gold, still decorates the pediment of the hotel in aggressive manner. There are some who freely, very freely, translate the proud motto *Pour y Parvenir* as "For the Parvenus"; but the "Victoria" is the hotel for them, and that legend really means "To attain," or, as an American might say, "To get there." What the choice of that determined sentiment originally meant, who shall say? but as the Manners family long since

obtained a dukedom, they may be said to have duly arrived, and it is difficult to see what else they can want.

Much might be written of the old-time visitors to the town, but very little anecdotal matter exists. For unconscious humour there is nothing so good as the diary of our greatest entomologist, who was here in 1797. On his tour he had found, with delight, a golden bug basking in the sun on his window-sill, but with less delight a something of the same genus, "new to me," on his stocking, in a little country inn.

On the evening of July 3rd he and a friend drove up to the "Ram" at Newmarket, as he duly records:—

"Arrived at Newmarket 6 p.m., where the "Ram," wide-opening its ravenous maw, stood to receive us. We regale ourselves, after an expeditious journey, upon a comfortable cup of tea, and then take a walk to the racecourse, as far as the stands. By the way, we observe *Centaurea calcitrapa* plentifully. At some distance we see the Devil's Dyke, and, terrified with the prospect, retreat with hasty steps to supper. *Soham cheese very fine. July 4th.*—On going into the quadrangle of this magnificent inn I observed a post-chaise with episcopal insignia; it belonged to our worthy diocesan. On the panel of the chaise door I took a new *Empis*."

XXV

THE flat-racing season at Newmarket—and incidentally the flat-catching season also—opens with the Craven Meeting on Easter Monday, and ends with the Houghton, or third October Meeting, towards the close of that month. Between these are the Second Spring, the two July, and the First and Second October Meetings, making in all eight annual events. But Newmarket does by no means hibernate with the end of October and merely come to life again in the spring. When the flat-racing ends, the hurdle-racing takes up the thread of sport, and allied with these winter activities are the runs of the Drag Hounds.

There are many courses on the Heath: the Old Cambridgeshire, nearest the town, where the historic Red Post, the Duke's Stand, and some of the old saddling-stables still remain; the long four-miles' Beacon Course, little used in its entirety, now that a two miles' contest is thought a good race; the Rowley Mile, named after Charles II., who was known among his familiars as "Old Rowley," either from his favourite riding-horse being so named, or else because his sacred Majesty, so grotesque of face, was thought to so greatly resemble a frog—and frogs are still, in country districts, known as "Anthony Rowleys"; the Swaffham Course, and the Bunbury Mile. There is no finer or more bracing race-ground in

the kingdom than this of Newmarket Heath, nor one so open, or where every stage of every race can be so well followed. It has no parallel elsewhere, and is certainly the very antithesis of Ascot, Goodwood, and Sandown, which are ladies' opportunities for display, as much as they are the sportsman's occasions for betting. Here, when the Cesarewitch and the Two Thousand Guineas are being run off, it is a very serious and earnest business, and toilettes only sparingly relieve the Quaker grey of the sporting crowd.

"No Betting Allowed" is the notice that the enquiring stranger sees repeated several times on notice-boards over against the New Stand. To bet legally you must pay your sovereign, half-sovereign, or five shillings for entrance to the various enclosures in the Stand: to lay or take the odds in the open is an indictable offence. Yet there is nothing else but quiet and earnest, but unostentatious, betting going forward all the while among the crowd assembled outside the rails. The bookmakers in the various rings, sanctified and immune from molestation at the hands of the law, by reason of those entrance-fees, may be heard shouting the odds like maniacs, but here the case is indeed altered. Those notices might really, with more appearance of common sense, be spelled "No Betting Aloud," for the very large amount of betting that actually does go on, under the very noses of the numerous foot and mounted police stationed here to prevent it, is conducted in undertones. Not whispers, by any means, but offers

made by bookmakers in conversational tones, easily to be heard by the crowd at large, of so many to one on the field; with money changing hands, visibly and indubitably, for all the world to see, and the same familiar faces of the bookmakers at every race throughout the year.

Here, in fact, we see the failure of an attempt to make the people moral by Act of Parliament—a failure that in its failing creates a great deal more immorality, and of a less venial kind, than that it originally set out to suppress, for there is nothing more certain than that the police, who do not see these things with the official eye, do most surely observe them with the merely physical eyes of ordinary human beings, and not only refuse to take proper cognisance of them, but "have a bit on" of their own, and thus place themselves in the Gilbertian position of rendering themselves liable to be given into their own custody for betting for ready money in a public place.

It behoves an innocent to be careful how he has that "bit on," for the Heath at race-time is no place for the guileless stranger with a few odd sovereigns to lose. There are those here whose sole mission in life is to plunder the unwary, and who have the keenest scent for what they elegantly term a "mug." Their method is a simple one, as you who have the curiosity to test it may find. You hang listlessly over the rails and assume the virtuous air, even if you have it not, of being unspotted from the world. If that, on the other hand, be your usual wear—why, then so much the

better. The experimentalist in this sort will not have long to wait before he gets a bite. Already, while he is taking up his position and gazing around with the air of one quite new to racing, he has been singled out from the surrounding crowds and marked down for attack by sharpers who are past-masters in the little frailties of human nature. Two men approach our innocent in being, or in seeming, and one of them, under his very nose, pays a little heap of glittering sovereigns—or counters—into the other's palm, with the remark that if he, the payee, had only sprung a little more on that dead cert, the winnings would have been really *worth* winning. Poor human nature swallows that bait as eagerly as trout rise to May flies, and when those two practical philosophers accidentally, as it were, take their victim into their confidence, his gold is already as good as gone. It seems the winner owes his luck to his very good friend here who is "in the know," and, with an inexhaustible series of good tips from the Ring, is willing—nay, eager—to give, not only his friend, but the most casual pick-up acquaintance of even less than five minutes' standing, the full benefit of that information which, if applied in the way he presently suggests, has the power of transmuting your silver into gold, and of increasing your solitary sovereign into tens and twenties.

No sport is more enjoyable than that of fooling sharks of this description; it is its own exceeding great reward. You can play them as the

fisherman does the salmon, and lead them on with ingenuous innocencies and artful idiotcies until they who think they have the greatest simpleton on earth to deal with, find themselves at length fairly gaffed and landed.

The amateur simpleton receives the introduction of "my friend from Tattersall's" with an air of eager credulity, and casually remarking that he has never before seen a race nor ever made a bet on one, raises the confederates' hopes to the highest pitch. The "friend from Tattersall's" has another "moral" for the next race, and recommends a sovereign placed on the selection; whereupon you consider it from this light and from that, and discuss it in all its bearings until they are half-crazed with anxiety. "Surely," says one, "surely you can afford to back a certainty?" "Of course, *if* it is a certainty," you say; and then, with the conscience-stricken qualms of the good young man, "Is it quite right to bet on a certainty?"

But the last touch of comedy comes when, having had those scruples satisfied, you insert an exploratory thumb and finger in your waistcoat pocket, and—find, regretfully, that you have come out without any money!

The effect of this is magical, and as you walk up the course to have a quiet laugh, the bitter curses of the disappointed sharps come after you, in heartfelt undertones. The horse selected for a winner comes in with the ruck, as, of course, these fellows had foreseen.

XXVI

Newmarket at other than race-times does by no means proclaim its occupation to the chance traveller along the road. He must rise betimes and fare forth early who would see the sheeted racers going to or returning from their morning gallops ; but such an early riser will find much to impress him. Two thousand horses are in training at Newmarket, but only he who in the brisk and racing early hours of the day sees the long processions belonging to the various owners filing at a walk along the High Street can realise the fact. Many a poor body is less warmly and comfortably clad than a racehorse out for his morning constitutional. Horse-cloths made with as much attention to individual fit as given one's own overcoat cover their bodies and necks, and even clothe heads and ears, and are all decorated with the owner's monogram. The trainer watches these morning gallops from the back of his own serviceable nag, and notes their "form" with the eye of a general officer inspecting troops. But he does not, as an American writer artlessly tells us, "amble by on his old-fashioned Suffolk Punch." This little quotation shows you the danger of using terms not properly understood ; for a Suffolk Punch is a horse of the dray-horse kind, and of the breed often used in ploughing ; furrow, if not thoroughbred, and a thought too substantial for a saddle-horse.

The trainer keenly watches these trials, and

so also do certain knowing gentlemen to whom the offensive name of "touts" is given. It is the business of their kind to study that "form" for the benefit of those who read the sporting papers, and to telegraph the performances day by day, so that the British working man, who so largely supports the bookmakers and the half-penny evening papers that thrive on the prognostications of "Captain Coe" and "Old Joe," may study the "form" aforesaid. With their heads filled with jargon of this kind, the working men and others, whose knowledge of a horse does not go far beyond the ability to distinguish his head from his tail end, are firmly of opinion that they can spot winners. That they are not often so fortunate does not discourage them, and when the tipsters fail, as in a very large proportion of cases they do, they keep a faith that in this otherwise sceptical world is as touching as it is uncommon.

The life of a tout is infinitely better than once it was, in the days when they were severely mauled by trainers unwilling that the doings of their horses should thus be made public. But it was long ago made clear that, even under the worst conditions, information would by some means be obtained, and so, furnished with field-glasses of the best, they, unmolested, garner up the lore of their craft day by day; and the trainer, conscious of the fact that his stables at least can be made to hold their secrets, if the gallops no longer can, is found often in amicable intercourse with these gleaners of useful knowledge.

It is a healthy life for all concerned, for the country is a bracing one and the hours are early. To each horse on these early morning trials is his attendant lad: apprentices of the training-stable, with everything possible to them in the way of professional prizes. They may develop as jockeys or as trainers on their own account, or may perhaps go to the Devil in many of the easy ways that racing affords. But there are few or no lads in any profession you like to name smarter in personal appearance or better disciplined than the apprentices and stable-boys of Newmarket. The modern trainer, with the consideration and income of an ambassador, the authority of the headmaster of a public school, and the domestic appointments of a prince of commerce, is the benevolent autocrat of his establishment. His lads have no excuse for outside pleasures, for he provides them with billiard-rooms, newspapers, and magazines, and every imaginable comfort of a well-appointed club, with the result that the well-known enthusiasm for and belief in horses trained at Newmarket in general becomes crystallised into an *esprit de corps* for particular stables. The whole profession has been revolutionised in every grade and in most methods. The jockey who used to reduce the "too, too solid flesh" that troubled even Hamlet—who had not the jockey's excuse for ridding himself of it—by the heroic and uncomfortable course of wearing two pairs of trousers, five or six waistcoasts, two or more coats, and then walking seven or eight miles in all that clothing, now adopts

other methods—greatly to the sorrow of the local tailors. Those old-time jocks who thus mortified the flesh must surely command our retrospective sympathy, for they did not merely so dress and so walk, but, coming to some inn at the end of the prescribed miles, took a seat by a roaring fire, and, piling on more clothes, sweated away the avoirdupois at a truly alarming rate until it was time to tramp home-along. Turkish baths nowadays perform the same office with little trouble, and jockeys more than usually keen on reducing weight take medicines in addition. It was through the severity of this self-adopted course that Archer brought himself into the low and feverish state in which he committed suicide.

But who would not be a successful jockey in these days of high retaining fees, special rewards, and popular favour? From the worldly point of view, judging things from the purely monetary standpoint, such an one looks down from his pinnacle upon the whole bench of Bishops, upon the Army, the Navy, the Church, the Stage, Literature, Art, and all the things that really count. You may not like it, but—"there you are," and it is useless to point out that the old verb "to jockey" means "to cheat, to trick," and must have derived from this profession. To one who might so point out this derivation, an obvious retort could be made that things have changed, and that as actors have risen from being in the eyes of the law mere roguish vagrants and "players of interludes," so jockeys may now be

honourable men. We cannot hark back to the times when every jock was made keep his place, and was paid less than his worth, instead of absurdly more.

What were the rewards of the jockey in those days? He received five guineas if he won and three if he lost, and when a former Duke of Grafton sent his jockey two five-pound notes after winning both the One Thousand and the Two Thousand Stakes, with the injunction to "take care of them," he was thought generous. In these days no jockey of repute, with the winning of classic races to his record, will get into the saddle for a smaller fee than £1,000, win or lose.

XXVII

The road on leaving Newmarket, at the crest of the High Street, branches in many directions from where a modern clock-tower stands, like a policeman, in the parting of the ways. The Clock Tower, which, as a prominent and venerated landmark, and one of the principal features of Newmarket, it behoves us, in all humility, to spell with capital letters, was erected by one "Charley" Blanton, owner of Robert the Devil, in honour of Victoria the Good. The Clock Tower is Blanton's, but the antithesis is our very own. Beyond this point the roads are reduced to two: that on the left

leading direct to Thetford and Norwich ; the right-hand fork conducting to Thetford by the loop road through Bury St. Edmunds. We will examine this road in detail before taking the direct route.

This is the "Bury side" of the town mentioned in the Jockey Club notices of the gallops available for exercising the horses, and the triangular stretch of common in the fork of the roads is the place referred to on all such notices as "the Severals," a name here in direct contradiction to its general meaning, which is an enclosed, as opposed to a common, field.

A busy day on the Severals is a pretty sight, for it is the place where the frisky yearlings are trained to obedience. Here you see them, cantering round and round, at the end of a rope, rejoicing in their youth, young and silly, before they have learnt their business in life, and, with their manes and long flowing tails not yet docked, and their limbs not grown to the lankiness of the full-grown racer, the most beautiful of animals. Their triumphs, and equally the anti-climax of their after-careers as cab-horses, and their final conversion into ha'porths of cats' meat on skewers, are mercifully hidden from them.

The road to Thetford through Bury is a lonely and, on the whole, a dull route, but it begins in lordly style, with lengthy rows of portentous racing establishments in all the showy glory of long gravelled drives and imposing gates. The later history of domestic architecture is unrolled before you, as you go along the Bury road, in

mid-Victorian grey brick and stucco, with gas-globes like unto the lamps of the Metropolitan Railway; in later Victorian white Suffolk brick with string-courses of red brick set angle-wise in a style alleged to be decorative; and in the "Queen Anne" *plus* Victorian Renaissance composite style of these latter days. The Edwardian style is still to seek. We need not study to tell who lives where, because the merest nonentities invariably live in the most ornate houses, and, with the varying fortunes of the Turf and them that fleet their little day upon it, those who flaunt so bravely this year are the next season gone no man knoweth whither; and few, except their creditors, care.

At last the houses end, and we are upon the open road, with the roadside plantation of firs, called the Long Belt, on the right, and the heaths and downs on the left, stretching away until they are lost in distance and in the harrs of the Fens. This, for the cyclist, is an express route, but we must not, for that reason, forget to pull up at the cross-roads, where a sign-post points in one direction to Chippenham and in the other to Moulton. Halt awhile and notice the great grassy mound beside that sign-post, for it is a spot known to the villages round about, and in Newmarket, as the "Boy's Grave." The boy thus handed down to fame was, according to the traditions of the countryside, a shepherd boy who lost a sheep from his flock, and, afraid to go to his employer and acknowledge it, hanged himself here—from the

sign-post, say some more credulous than their fellows. A big boy, and even a giant, you, looking at this mound, might think; but its size is due to the care of the road-menders, who

THE "BOY'S GRAVE."

not only keep it in order, but bank it up with turf cut from the selvedges of the wayside.

Legends are not rare in this neighbourhood. Indeed, along the by-road in the direction of Moulton one reaches Folly Hill, the crest of the

downs can be seen from here, with a fragment of wall and a clump of beech-trees on its summit, and a story of its own in the making. Here, in fact, we are peculiarly fortunate, for on Folly Hill it is possible to note the genesis of a legend and to record it ere time has evolved a story, full-blown and mysterious, out of very matter-of-fact materials. A story of sorts is, indeed, already current in Newmarket, where the enquiring stranger after things in general can obtain some finely inaccurate information as to what he may expect to see on Folly Hill, or "God's Evil," as it is alternatively known. With this he is prepared to find a stone pillar in a wood, the sole relic of a house built, at some time unspecified, by "a man almost a millionaire," unfortunately unnamed, but with the blackest of reputations.

There is not really (it may at once be said) any such pillar, but the gable end of a ruined old red-brick house stands up against the sky on the hill-top, and is known to the farmer of Trinity Hall Farm, on which it stands, as "the Pilgrim." The ploughmen know the beech clump on the hill as "Cobbler's Bush," because, according to their tale, "a ole cobbler what used to mend boots lived there. There's a ole tree there what nobody mustn't touch, because he planted it."

"And what is that old building on the hill-top?"

"That's a ole rewing they calls the Barks. Nobody mustn't touch it."

"Not touch it; why not?"

"Because the soldiers come to look at it."

At that explanation a flood of light is thrown upon the name of "Barks." It is the local pronunciation of "Barracks," and that name comes, of course, from the "soldiers" who go to look at it. Who are those soldiers? Merely those who have at some time or other accompanied a surveying party of the Ordnance Survey, for map-making purposes. No doubt a fine gory embattled legend will be built on this some day, probably with Cromwell, that arch-villain of popular imagination, as the moving figure in it.

Passing over the Kennet at Kentford, where the ragged remnants of the old bridge even yet stand in the water, beside the new, and where the unusually good Flamboyant-traceried Gothic windows of the church, looking down from a road-side knoll, gladden the heart of the ecclesiologist, the character of the road becomes like the life of a saint on earth—flat, featureless, dull, and uninteresting. Just as the follies and vices of the hardened sinner make the most readable biography, so do those scenic accidents that give steep hills and difficult roads make interest for the amateur of the picturesque. Higham station, with the spire of Barrow church peering over distant trees, is not of itself either remarkable or romantic, and in so far that it does not look its real age, the toll-house standing at the cross-roads is like those modern grandmothers whose jimp waists and springtide tresses are the wonder of their grandchildren.

Few signs of life vary the monotony of the flat fields, and when the roadside inn known as "Saxham White Horse," and inappropriately endued with a coating of red wash, opens out ahead in one of the long perspectives, it is as though one had found an unexpected habitation in an empty land. Risby village shows some indications, off to the left hand, and, for so unpromising a district, is remarkably picturesque, with rugged dingles and ridges, and a round-towered old church in a tree-embowered lane looking as though it had been designed by Morland. It is an Early English church, without aisles, but with a lofty chancel arch on whose either side are elaborate stone tabernacles. A slip of brass on the chancel floor records that

"Here lyeth the body of Mr. Edward Kirke, Esq., 1613."

Returning to the road, a detour made on the other side of it, to Little Saxham church, reveals another, and finer, tower. A great deal of mystery has been made of the round-towered churches of East Anglia, and antiquaries of a bygone age expended much unnecessary ingenuity in seeking some out-of-the-way reason of ritual or defence for their existence; but the reason of their being is simple enough. They are found, almost exclusively in England, in these eastern counties, where building-stone does not exist. Norfolk has no fewer than 125 of these round towers, and Suffolk 40. Essex has 7, and Cambridgeshire only 2. The greatest

number are found where flint is plentiful, for they are constructed chiefly of that material, and the circular walls have that shape because

LITTLE SAXHAM CHURCH.

it is thus possible to dispense with the stone quoins necessary for binding the angles of square buildings. In a word, the round towers are round for the same reason that compels a

man to wear a silver watch when he would like a gold chronometer—they were less expensive.

Here, at Little Saxham, we have a particularly fine example, of Norman date. It is probable that in this case a desire existed, for some reason now lost to us, to make a greater show than customary, for the tower here is taller than most. Its lower stages are in severely plain flint-work, but the upper storey is quite elaborate and wholly faced with stone.

An elaborate monument to Lord Crofts fills one side of a chapel in Little Saxham church. He was one of Charles II.'s merry companions, but here is made to look sufficiently unhappy. The effigies of himself and his wife are shown in painful semi-reclining attitudes, as though they would very much like to get up, but could not. My lord's expression, underneath his Baron's coronet, is particularly agonised.

The uneventful road on to Bury St. Edmunds is brought to a conclusion by the barracks, the first harbinger of the town, at the outer end of the long wide street called Risby Gate.

XXVIII

I HAVE never been able to see Bury St. Edmunds in the favourable light of Carlyle's description of the town. Listen to what he says of it: "The *Burg*, Bury, or 'Berry' as they call it,

of St. Edmund is still a prosperous brisk Town; beautifully diversifying, with its clear brick houses, ancient clean streets, and 20,000 or 15,000 busy souls, the general grassy face of Suffolk; looking out right pleasantly from its hill-slope towards the rising sun: and on the eastern edge of it still runs, long, black, and massive, a range of monastic ruins. . . . Here stranger or townsman, sauntering at his leisure amid these vast grim venerable ruins, may persuade himself that an Abbey of St. Edmundsbury did once exist; nay, there is no doubt of it: see here the ancient massive Gateway, of architecture interesting to the eye of Dilettantism; and farther on, that other ancient Gateway, now about to tumble, unless Dilettantism, in these very months, can subscribe money to cramp it and prop it."

That is the Carlylean picture of the place, and a very desirable habitation of picturesqueness and all the joys he paints it. But that is not quite the real Bury. How it managed so to impress him is a mystery, for the town itself is commonplace, and the great churches and the ruins of its still greater Abbey are quite distinct from it. Even those Gothic remains are sad and grim, and have not the usual inspiring quality of such vestiges of the past. In fact, nothing in the present condition of Bury in timber, brick, and stone can serve to envisage its ancient story. This is the tragedy of Bury, for that story is one of the most gorgeous of romances.

We first hear of the place, as "Beodric's Weorth," at the very remote period of A.D. 631. Of Beodric we known nothing, and the spot is mentioned thus early only because Sigebert, King of East Anglia at that time, founded a monastery here, a monastery in which he became a monk, and whose cloisters he only forsook to wage war with the heathen Penda. Fighting for the Cross he died, and thus early did the town secure the chance of honouring a martyr.

But not to the earliest or most deserving of those who have laid down their lives in the cause did the highest honours accrue, and we can scarce blink the fact that to St. Edmund, King and Martyr, who suffered a hundred and sixty years later, fell a great deal more than his just share.

Edmund, who was crowned King of East Anglia on Christmas Day, 856, reigned thirteen years before the great invasion of the Danes in 869 broke up his kingdom and brought him to a tragical end at Eglesdene, near Hoxne. Oakley Park is supposed to be the site of "Eglesdene." Near by is a bridge over the Dove, known as "Gold Bridge," the successor of the one under whose arch the fugitive King was hiding, according to the legend, when a newly-married couple, crossing the bridge by moonlight, caught the glint of his golden spurs in the water and revealed his lurking-place to the Danes.

If you consider it at all closely, the legend is

not at this point very convincing, for, in the terrible wars of extermination then waged, when not only the actual combatants, but the entire people, went in fear, it is not very likely that honeymooning couples would be wandering about in the moonlight; but that is a detail. St. Edmund was, after all, very human, as well as very saintly, for he did what many an unregenerate would have done—he cursed that couple who revealed his presence. Nay, he did more; and perpetrated a wickedness of which no mere son of Belial or everyday child of ungodliness would have been guilty. He cursed every couple who in the future should cross that bridge to be married. 'Twas not well done, St. Edmund!

The legend goes on to tell how the Danes bound him to a tree and shot him to death with arrows until he was stuck full of them, like St. Sebastian. The very tree—an ancient oak—was for ages pointed out, and it is a marvellous fact that in 1849, when it fell, and was cut up, an arrow-head was found in the heart of that hoary trunk. This is not the place to tell of the many marvels that followed; but in the year 903, after the body had lain for thirty-three years in a wooden chapel at Hoxne, it was removed to Beodric's Weorth, where it was placed in the Church of St. Mary, and became the bone of contention between the regular and the secular canons, until the time came, in 1010, when the Danes again overran the country, when they sank their differences, and conveyed the precious body

of the Saint to London, for safety. It was escorted back in 1013, working many incredible miracles on the way, and replaced in the church, where it remained until Aylwin's great monastic church, begun under Canute, in 1020, was completed.

Already the sainted King had become more powerful than any other miracle-monger, but his name had not yet been given to the town, which retained its old style until the time of Edward the Confessor, when it first became known as St. Edmund's Bury.

As everywhere else, the Norman Conquest meant a great increase of ecclesiastical wealth and power at Bury. The Monastery was rebuilt, and its Abbot, mitred and all-powerful within the wide-spreading Limits of St. Edmund, was little less than a Bishop. The sanctity and potency of St. Edmund were not less than those of St. Thomas in after-years became. Pilgrims of every estate in the realm flocked to his shrine. Even kings entered into his courts with humility. Edward the Confessor walked the last mile barefoot. Henry I., Henry II., and Richard I. were frequently here. King John, however, was in different sort. Jocelin of Brakelond, the old monkish chronicler, who was born in that very street of "Short Brakland" we may see in Bury to this day, tells us how, in 1203, that King stayed with the Abbot a whole fortnight, the said Abbot and Monastery being at that time only by way of recovering from much domestic mismanagement of former Abbots, and ill-prepared

for the costs and charges of such entertaining. Carlyle, with picturesque efforts at recovering something of that visit beyond the mere dry and innutritious bones of dates, pictures that monarch "a blustering, dissipated human figure, with a kind of blackguard quality air, in cramoisy velvet, or other uncertain texture, uncertain cut, with much plumage and fringing; amid numerous other noisy figures of the like; riding abroad with hawks; talking noisy nonsense; tearing out the bowels of St. Edmundsbury Convent (its larders, namely, and cellars) in the most ruinous way."

And when at last he went his ways, and the Abbot expected something kingly, he merely left a handsome silk cloak for St. Edmund, or rather, pretended to leave it, for one of his retinue borrowed it, "and *we*," says Jocelin, or Carlyle for him, "never got sight of it again." And all else the King gave was "one shilling and one penny, to say a mass for him; and so departed—like a shabby Lackland as he was! Thirteen pence sterling! this was what the Convent got from Lackland, for all the victuals he and his had made away with. We, of course, said our mass for him, having covenanted to do it—but let impartial posterity judge with what degree of fervour!"

The memory of King John's hungry hordes and his shabby thirteen pence lingered at Bury, and it must have been with a peculiar satisfaction that the Abbot saw assembled at the high altar of his church the representative concourse of Barons

who, on St. Edmund's Day, 1214, swore to obtain from the King that Magna Charta which they did actually wring unwillingly from him in the following year.

Royal visits continued until the time of Henry VI., who held a Parliament here, but all the glories of the place are gone, and are only dimly perceived amid the mouldering ruins and damp churchyard walks that alone are left. The spot where the liberties of the English people were sworn to be upheld is accurst by the memory of how, three hundred years later, in the Marian persecution, twelve martyrs suffered at the stake for liberty of religious thought.

XXIX

A GREAT open space stretches outside the boundary walls of the old Abbey precincts. Here, on "Angel Hill," as it is called, Bury fair was held in days of old. It was no mere rustic saturnalia, but a fashionable institution, and lasted a fortnight. A one-day fair still held annually, on September 21st, is the sole relic of this once important event, famous not only for the business, but also for the matrimonial matches concluded there.

The "Angel," a dyspeptic and gloomy-looking house of huge proportions and sad-coloured brick, faces this wide, empty space, and adds a quite

"ANGEL HILL," BURY ST. EDMUNDS.

unnecessary emphasis to its dulness. There was an inn of the same name here so early as 1452, neighboured by others, but in 1779 the whole of the buildings on this side were removed and the present row erected. No one would suspect from the commonplace exterior of the "Angel" that its great cellars are of mediæval date, and comprised of groined crypts; but they do not redeem the general aspect of the building, and we do not look upon the "Angel" with interest because it figures in the *Pickwick Papers*, but only in surprise that Dickens should have thought it worth mention. He did so mention it because the "Angel" was the principal coaching-inn of the town. There was—indeed, there still is—the "Suffolk" hotel, but to and from the "Angel" came and went the Norwich Mail and the best of the post-chaise traffic. In the days when "every gentleman visited London at least once in his lifetime," the house may by dint of much business have worn a cheery look; but now that almost every one comes up to town by rail many times a year, the place has the air of a public institution of the hospital or infirmary order. Looking upon this scene, the proverbial slowness of the Bury coaches recurs to the stranger, who remembers that old story of a pedestrian walking from Newmarket and overtaking— not being overtaken by—the stage. The coachman offered him a lift. "No, thank you," said he; "I'm in a hurry to-day," and soon disappeared in advance of the lumbering conveyance.

One never thoroughly realises the full meaning of the word "respectable" until the acquaintance of Bury St. Edmunds is made. Respectability squats heavily upon the place and is incarnated on every flat-faced house-front, twinkles from every matutinally polished brass door-knocker, is seen down every dull street vista, and dogs your footsteps into the Abbey grounds, where the respectable burgesses lie in their respectable graves, in hopes of a Heaven planned on respectable and exclusive lines. Even the old abbots and monks are robbed of their historic glamour and are respectable likewise—and by that same token commonplace. It is a respectable landscape, too, upon whose flat suave fields you look from the higher streets of the town; flat and featureless, good for the husbandman, but, lacking even the dropsical, water-logged interest of the Fens, the very negation of the picturesque. In Defoe's time it was equally respectable, as he naïvely tells us. "The beauty of this town," he says, "consists in the number of gentry who dwell in and near it, the polite conversation among them, the affluence and plenty they live in, and the pleasant country they have to go abroad in." How exquisitely fragrant of snobbishness!

XXX

The ditchwater-dull town of Bury comes to an end with Northgate Street and its continuation of

"Out-Northgate"; past the curious railway station built in the Jacobean style, and presenting an odd likeness to some ancient mansion of the Hatfield House type, through whose centre a railway has been driven, leaving only the wings standing. Everything is on the largest scale: broad roads, with few people in them; great brick railway bridge over them; tall cupola'd towers of the station looking down upon them, and roomy houses facing them. Resultant emptiness and chilly vastness, infinitely uncomfortable and unhomely.

At the end of Out-Northgate, looking upon the footpath, are the shattered remains of St. Saviour's Hospital, very small and unobtrusive. It is possible to stand here the livelong day and challenge the passers-by with questions about this old ruin, and to find when day is done that a monumental ignorance prevails upon the subject. Yet it is an historic place, for it was here that, according to tradition, the good Duke Humphrey of Gloucester was found strangled in 1446.

At the "Toll-house" inn the road forks, continuing on the right to Fornham St. Martin and Thetford along the dullest of roads. Away to the left-hand is Fornham St. Geneviève, the scene of the obscure Battle of Fornham, fought in 1173. That was a short-lived rebellion crushed here in that year at the passage of the little river Lark. The aggrieved Earl of Leicester, striving against Henry II. and flying the country, had returned

with an army of Flamand mercenaries, and, marching across country, made for St. Edmundsbury. He had come thus far when he was met by a strong force opposing any further advance, and completely routed near the church. It remained for modern times to discover the bodies of the many slain on this occasion. A hoary and decayed ash-tree that from time immemorial had grown at the crest of a great mound was being demolished, when at its roots the awe-struck countrymen uncovered a number of skeletons neatly arranged in a circle, one above the other; and somewhere about the same time a gold ring of antique design, thought to have belonged to the Countess of Leicester, was fished up from the river-bed, together with relics of the pots and pans of that overwhelmed host, and some Henry II. pennies that those slaughtered men-at-arms had doubtless hoped to expend in long drinks at Bury, after the hoped-for victory was won. The ancient church of Fornham St. Geneviève was burned down, June 24th, 1782, through the extraordinary accident of a man shooting at jackdaws and firing into the thatched roof. The ruins stand in Fornham Park, and fill the humble office of helping to support a water-tank.

Ingham church, beside the road on to Thetford, is highly uninteresting, and the few wayside cottages commonplace. Away to the left, out of sight, is Culford Park, seat of Earl Cadogan, exploiter of Chelsea in these days and recipient of fabulous sums of "unearned incre-

ment" in the shape of ground-rents. Two miles onward from Ingham, the dozen cottages of the hamlet called Seven Hills dot the lonely road at short intervals, and behind them is the long line of the seven prehistoric sepulchral mounds that stand sponsors for this modern settlement. At Rymer Point, a little distance onward, we touch upon the broad acres of the Duke of Grafton's estate of Euston, and presently come into the village of Barnham. Beyond the village the battered remains of the old "Franchise Cross," which once marked the boundary of the Liberty of St. Edmund, stand by the way, and still mark the limits of Thetford and Barnham parishes. None is sufficiently humble to do that cross reverence nowadays, but in the old times, when it was protected by a specific proclamation by the Abbot of Bury, that all who injured it would be anathematised and cursed with the fires of Hell, this old landmark was dealt gently with.

It is from here at Barnham that the Icknield Way can with little difficulty be reached and traced into Thetford. To find it, we must turn to the left in Barnham Street, and, passing the little railway station, pursue the cross-road that leads for a mile along open commons to where the boundary of the Elveden estate is marked by one of Lord Iveagh's new lodges. Just short of this lodge is the Icknield Way, a green track crossing the road at right angles on the skirts of a dark wood of fir-trees. Here

the boundaries of the two parishes of Barnham and Elveden march together, the Way itself the dividing line. It is still a very noticeable grassy track, but has for centuries been disused as a public road. It was used by the cattle-drovers, who to the last favoured the prehistoric tracks of the country, and thus avoided the payment of tolls levied along the turnpikes. Their flocks and herds were great features of old wayside life, until the cattle-trucks of quick railway transport in modern times destroyed the drovers' business.

Very few of the country folk know this as the Icknield Way, and not a great number have ever heard of it as the drove-road, but the cross-roads are known in all the neighbourhood by the little turfy mound called "Marman's Grave," traditionally the burial-place of a suicide in those uncharitable old times when the midnight burial without Christian rites, and with a stake driven through the body, was the world's last act of injustice towards those poor despairing souls whom cruel circumstance had tortured beyond endurance. Who the unhappy "Marman" was, and when or why he gladly left an existence so hateful to him that he could even contemplate with equanimity that *post-mortem* indignity of a stake through his vitals, we shall never know, and the little stone post cresting his grave tells us nothing, for although it looks like some simple memorial of him, its sole inscription, the letters "B" and "E," give no clue in his

direction, for they only mark the respective bounds of Barnham and Elveden.

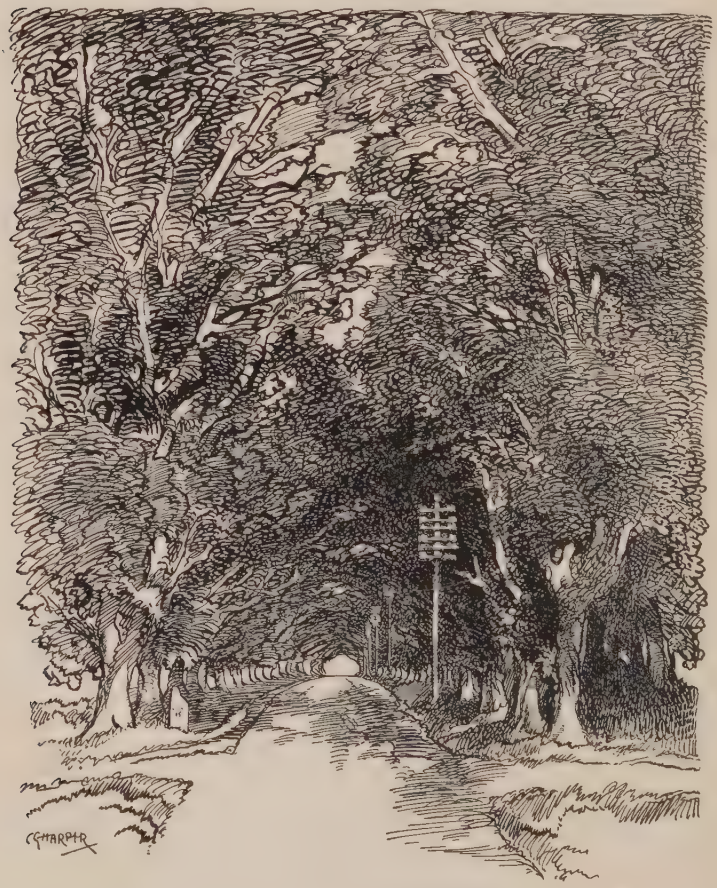
The Way reaches Thetford in another two miles, across the heath. Its course lay athwart the present road from Barnham, into the town, just where the gasworks stand, in the outskirts. But not only those far-off Icenians came

MARMAN'S GRAVE.

this way, where those unromantic gasometers scent the heath and stop up the immemorial track: for this portion of the Way remained the chief, if, indeed, not the only, entrance into Thetford until the close of the seventeenth century, when the river Ouse was first bridged along the line of the main road from Elveden.

XXXI

HAVING now disposed of the loop-road to Thetford through Bury, we are free to take the main



AVENUE NEAR NEWMARKET.

route from Newmarket, by Barton Mills and Elveden. It is a wilder and a lonelier, but yet not a dull road, like that just traversed.

Once beyond the long line of trainers' houses and stables, fringing the road as far as the entrance to Chippenham Park, the heaths that surround Newmarket begin again and plunge the explorer once more into unsheltered wilds. It is after a sun-stricken, wind-swept, or rain-beaten course of these that the mile-long elm avenue leading to the Kennet stream, and the Red Lodge beyond it, comes so welcome. There is surely no more beautiful avenue in the kingdom than this, whose trees interlace their branches overhead in the shape of a true Gothic arch, and really form that similitude to a cathedral nave of which we often hear but in avenues so very, very rarely see.

At the crossing of the little Kennet we finally leave Cambridgeshire and come into Suffolk. On the Suffolk side stands the "Red Lodge" inn, a solitary old house on the heaths that again resume, and continue until the chalk is changed for a gravelly soil at the summit of the rise called Chalk Hill. It is a lonelier road now than ever it had been in all the centuries between the Middle Ages and the dawn of the railway era. Railways at one blow took not only the passenger traffic, but the carriage of goods and minerals; and the cattle and sheep once driven in hundreds of thousands along the highways and byways began to be despatched in cattle-trucks.

We cannot fully realise this olden state of the roads, but we can make an effort towards

it: can project ourselves into the seventeenth century, and see and hear the droves of turkeys, five hundred in each, come gobbling and bubbling, in the manner peculiar to turkeys, all the way from the farmyards to the London markets. Can also watch in imagination the waddling march of the thousands of geese bred on these commons, and sent hissing and snapping down this long course of a hundred miles to celebrate the September feast of St. Michael on many a metropolitan dinner-table. Alas, poor Michaelmas geese! Alas, too, for the Christmas geese! but *they* went more gloriously to martyrdom, being carried all the way instead of driven. The reason for this was that the muddy roads of late autumn and early winter were too soft and sticky for their feet, and so they rode to town in the "goose-cart," a four-storeyed conveyance as Defoe tells us, "with two horses abreast, like a coach, so quartering the road for the ease of the gentry that thus ride."

A neglected item of information, from a local newspaper of the time, helps the imagination in later, but still forgotten, things. Thus we read of a village on the Ipswich route from London to Norwich: "In the last droving season, 1845, the landlord of the 'Bird in Hand,' Tasburgh, housed 9,300 beasts. He purchased for their consumption and for horses, etc., fifty tons of hay; but in the following year, owing to the opening of the Norfolk Railway, only twelve beasts were taken in, and only $8\frac{1}{2}$ cwt. of hay was wanted."

Flat lands, under cultivation, bring us from this point to the river Lark, at Barton Mills, whose church tower, with that of Mildenhall, a mile away, now begins to puzzle the stranger. The village of Barton Mills, lying directly on the road, is a kind of preface to, or outpost of, Mildenhall, a town placed on an out-of-the-way loop road, and never seen by those who make straight for Thetford. But we, at any rate, will see it, coming to this backwater of life along a flat road that doubles on itself and winds artfully amid a maze of lazy rills and brimming ditches, covered with an unbroken surface of duckweed. The name of Mildenhall suggests mildew, and although there be nothing in its origin to indicate anything of the kind, it is indeed set down in a fine damp situation, on the very edge of the sodden Fens. Mildenhall's characteristic trees are the black poplar and the willow, both water-loving species. Mildenhall suffices to itself, and it is well it can so compass a full-orbed life, for if this solitary little town were dependent in any way upon outside existence for protection against *ennui*, that would be a maimed existence its burgesses would lead. It stands at the end of a branch line from Cambridge, and on the Lark Navigation, and has an air of enduring the railway as an interloping enterprise, while regarding the canal with a benevolent interest. The busy flour-mills, the gas-works, and the oil-cake stores that cluster round the canal wharf support this self-sufficing aspect, and the grave majesty of the old houses

in and near the market-place, overlooked by the noble tower of the cathedral-like parish church, supply the last touch of satisfied independence. But the town takes a kindly interest in the chance stranger whom good roads and a bicycle do occasionally bring, in summer-time; and the artist who sits down on the pavement to sketch the picturesque grouping of the curious old wooden market cross with the church tower is sure of the courteous offer of a chair from some polite shopkeeper.

Hard by is the old manor-house. The church, whose great size has already been remarked, has the tombs of Norths and Bunburys, who have lived and died there, with that of a fifteenth-century Lord Mayor of London, a native of Barton Mills, and named from his birthplace, Henry de Barton, who was the first to see that London was lighted by night.

Mildenhall church is kindred in spirit with the town. One of the finest Perpendicular buildings in the county, it has a metropolitan aspect, an air of over-lordship above the villages far and near that is not a little striking.

Even here, at Mildenhall, the shadow of the second Boer War has rested, for a brass tablet on a wall in the church records simply how natives of the town laid down their lives for England on that alien soil. Thus on the bones of the English is the Empire reared, and there be few among the rural churches of this mother-land of ours that do not record some such sacrifice, for the army of

MILDENHALL.

250,000 men came from the highways and byways, and few were the families, rich or poor, that had not the keenest personal interest in the struggle which newspaper lies and contradictions, and the grossest political jealousies conspired to render inglorious in report and speech. Those soldiers were, perhaps, commonplace enough in their everyday lives, but these simple records, and the many other such throughout the country, elevate them to the status of martyrs in a cause, beside whom the little peddlers in votes seem mean and sordid indeed. But we must return to Barton and make for Thetford, and since we cannot reform the politicians, may e'en leave them alone.

XXXII

The sinuous road out of Barton Mills is one of the chief beauty-spots of all these one hundred and thirty miles to Cromer. Nowhere is a more curving and undecided main-road than this, at the crossing of the little river Lark, and few have so great a charm. Here, close by that old roadside inn, the "Bull," stand the flour-mills that continue to give a meaning to the old place-name, and past them flows that fishful river, along a reach densely shaded by poplars and willows. Graceful plantations line the road and stud the marshy ground that presently gives place again to mile upon mile of heath.

Over seven miles of heather and bracken lead

to Elveden, said by Fox, more than a century ago, to have been the best-stocked sporting estate, for its size, in the kingdom. The wayfarer of the present day can honestly re-echo the opinion of that statesman, for the pheasants swarm. Even upon the highway, as the cyclist passes, instead of scurrying away, they come out of the hedges and stare after him, impudently, as though they alone have a right here. To the pedestrian they are rather embarrassing, following to heel like dogs. They are so used to being handled that they take every man-person for a keeper or food-distributer. and with the inducement of a pocketful of maize, judiciously distributed, they could no doubt be induced to follow one into Thetford.

Those whose business it is to look after the game at Elveden—or "Elden," as the country people call it—are legion. Elveden is, in fact, maintained by Lord Iveagh, just as it has always been, but now still more strictly, for sport, and here along the white ribbon of the road, or across the purple heaths, you may, in due season, see the "sportsmen" and the beaters setting forth in the morning to slay by wholesale, or in the evening returning, their lust for death and destruction sated for the day. It is undoubtedly a large question, but to the present writer it seems that the real sporting era was when the gunner spent a long day tramping the coverts, the turnip-fields, or the stubble, and sought his quarry with the hunter's skill, rather than waiting for it to be driven to him.

BARTON MILLS.

Elveden has seen a good many changes in the last hundred years or so. Admiral Viscount Keppel, who purchased the property in 1768, and died in 1786, left it to the fourth Earl of Albemarle, and here was born in 1799, in the old Hall, rebuilt, or rather, remodelled, in 1870, that tough one of that tough and long-lived race of Keppels, George Thomas, the sixth Earl, who as a boy of sixteen fought at Waterloo, and succeeding his elder brother in the title in 1851, died in 1891. It was somewhere about the year of Waterloo that difficulties of sorts befell the Keppels, and Elveden then passed out of their hands into those of the Newtons, an undistinguished family, who held the estate until 1863, when it was purchased by the Maharajah Duleep Singh, and thus became associated with the romance of that dispossessed ruler of Lahore.

Imperial interests in India, and in greater measure the fears of the statesmen of that time, dealt harshly with that Oriental prince; excluded him from his ancestral honours, and made him a life-long stranger to his own people, and to the land of his birth. In exchange for his native rule and glorious sunshine, he was to have an annuity of "not less than £40,000 and not more than £50,000," for "himself, his family, and dependents," with domicile in our isle of fogs and mists. How ill the Government kept faith with him may be judged when it is stated that he never at any time received more than £25,000 a year.

Strange to say, he took kindly to our ways, and settled down here as a country gentleman. With the general reduction of rents, and the heavy outlays he had made upon the reconstruction of Elveden Hall, he eventually found it necessary to have recourse to the India Office, for immediate financial aid. As a result, his income was reduced to an annual £12,000.

The Maharajah had early embraced Christianity, and in 1864, in Egypt, had married Miss Bamba Müller. In 1882, after he had vainly striven to bring the Government to a performance of the original compact, and had fruitlessly petitioned Parliament to that end, he sailed for India, but was refused permission to enter. At Aden, from political motives, and also, we may suppose, from indignation at the breach of faith he had experienced, he abjured Christianity, and flung himself into the arms of Russia. Thence he retired to Paris. A few years later he re-embraced the Christian religion, and made his peace personally with Queen Victoria, at Grasse. He died at Paris, in 1893, in his fifty-sixth year.

With that event, the Elveden estate again changed hands, being purchased by Lord Iveagh, then newly raised to the Beerage. He had been disappointed in his earlier purchase of Savernake from the Marquis of Ailesbury, the Courts setting the bargain aside and refusing sanction for the property being alienated from the Bruce family.

Since then, the village of Elveden has been transformed. It is still a village, placed like a

settlement in a wild, uncultivated country, with the primeval heath visible from every cottage door, but the black flint cottages have given place everywhere to red brick, and it now lives in the memory of the passing motorist fleeting the lonely road at an illegal thirty miles an hour as a red streak on a brown plain of moorland. The red brick is, no doubt, very smart, but it is distinctly an alien material here, and altogether out of

ELVEDEN.

place. It would, indeed, in any earlier period than this of cheap transport facilities, have been impossible, for red bricks are not a local manufacture and the cost of bringing them here would in other times have been altogether prohibitive. The vanished black-flint buildings, constructed of the material found locally, were instinct with the spirit of the place, and looked as though they had grown out of the soil, and were a part of the land.

To a less hurried passenger than a motorist there is much food for reflection in the changed aspect of the village; but reflection is all that will be fed here, for to find a wayside hostelry is a difficult quest, and the traveller who comes, hungry and thirsty, perhaps wet through, from the many miles of wild, inhospitable heath on either side, is like to go on until he reaches Barton Mills or Thetford before he obtains shelter and refreshment, unless, indeed, he would be content with an obscure beerhouse off the road. To suggest a bottle of Guinness's genuine Dublin brew may, for all one knows, be *petit treason* at Elveden, and the villagers must, possibly, see to it, lest they grow stout—and allusive!

It is a handsome, although inhospitable village that has grown up at the bidding of the master of millions whose coroneted "I" stares you out of countenance from every red-brick cottage. Architectural taste is evident in the schools, the beautiful estate office, the village hall, the post-office, and the village in general. All around, on the warrens, the waterless hills are dotted with wells, and the whole estate provided with the most exquisitely steam-rolled roads, and cared for as no one ever could have cared for it before. Yet it is not unpleasing to one who has experienced the courtesy of the Maharajah in years bygone to find that the memory of the "Black Prince," as he was here affectionately known, is still cherished at Elveden, even though it is now owned by the, as far as mere lucre goes, more princely prince of black beer.

Elveden Park forms one side of the village street, and through the trees the golden glitter of pinnacles can be seen, leading the stranger to think his eyes have rested on the Hall. But those are merely the stables, where the horses are housed in a manner that might almost have contented Heliogabalus. The stables at Sandringham are not so lavish, but then, of course, they belong merely to the King. The Hall itself is not externally so flamboyant, and is in essentials the staid Italian Renaissance of some years ago. But once within, it is a gorgeous display of wealth rejoicing in itself and attempting feats resembling the painting of the lily and the gilding of refined gold. You pass from an oak-panelled entrance hall, with doors barbarically sheathed in glittering patterned metal and flanked by passages whose coved ceilings are covered with Renaissance designs in raised plaster, into a domed central hall of pure white marble, designed in the Indian style and most elaborately carved and fretted in that extravagant Oriental taste. It is like coming from the Hotel Metropole into a first-class mausoleum, and when you enter you cannot help thinking you are dead and buried and laid to rest in an inferior copy of the Taj Mahal. This extravagant feature, newly completed, is said to have cost £10,000.

As one leaves the Park the lions of Lahore are noticed, still decorating the stone gateways. Near by is Elveden church, the only remaining vestige of the old village: a humble little place,

with mural monument and medallion portrait of Admiral Keppel and an east window to the memory of the Maharajah Duleep Singh and Bamba, his wife.

So we will leave Elveden, cut adrift, save in this sole respect, from old times. Useless to look for the "Hare and Hounds" posting-house, where the post-chaises changed horses, and equally fruitless to seek the old toll-house, the scene on October 25th, 1825, of an accident to the "Magnet" coach, on its way from London to Norwich, when the leaders shied as they were passing through the gate and the coach was upset, with the result that an outside passenger, a widow from Hargham, was killed.

XXXIII

The $3\frac{3}{4}$ miles onwards to Thetford were known and dreaded in the old days as "Thetford Heath." Elveden Gap, passed on the way, is the name of a clump of firs, marking where the boundaries of estates and parishes run. Beyond it stretches the lonely heath. Pollard, in his terrifying print of the "Norwich Mail in a Thunderstorm," makes this the scene of a very dramatic picture, with the lightning horribly forky and the rain very slanty and penetrating. Thetford Heath was an ill place on such an occasion; but the elements were not the chiefest of its dangers, which in any year from mediæval times until modern were rather to be expected at the hands of man.

There still exists in the old church of St. George Colegate, Norwich, a tragical epitaph to the memory of a traveller slain on these wild wastes in those dangerous times. It is engraved on a ledger-stone forming a part of the flooring at the west end of the nave, and is hidden from the gaze of the casual visitor only by the matting. A skull and cross-

ELVEDEN GAP.

bones are placed above the inscription, which runs :—

"Here Lyeth y^e^ Body of Mr. Bryant Lewis, who was Barbarously Murdered upon y^e^ Heath, near Thetford, Sep. y^e^ 13^th^, 1698.

Fifteen wide wounds this stone veils from thine eyes,
But Reader, Hark! their voice doth pierce the skyes.
Vengeance! cried Abel's blood, 'gainst cursed Cain,
But better things spake CHRIST when He was Slayn
Both, both, cries Lewis 'gainst his bar'brous foe,
Blood, Lord, for Blood, but save his soul from woe.

THOU SHALT DO NO MURDER (Exodus xx. 13).

Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.
For in y^e^ image of God made He man (Genesis ix. 6)."

The register of St. George's, which records the burial of the unfortunate Bryant Lewis on September 19th, six days following the murder, is at curious variance with the epitaph, for it makes the date 1697.

We do not hear anything of the circumstances under which Bryant Lewis was killed, nor does it appear that his murderers were ever caught.

Thetford must have been a welcome sight to the timorous travellers of old, and surely no place of pilgrimage was hailed with more delight than that with which they first glimpsed the tower of St. Mary's and the outlying houses of the Suffolk suburb of the town.

One comes downhill into Thetford: down into the valley of the Thet and Lesser Ouse, which divide the county of Suffolk and the land of the Norfolk Dumplings. The flint-towered church that thus heralds the town is the oldest of the remaining three, and was severely handled in Cromwellian times, when it was converted for a while into a stable. It had, until 1850, a thatched roof. Here the road from Bury St. Edmunds falls in, a junction of roads still known by some of the older generation as "Cockpit Corner," a name that marks the site of the cockpit which stood here in those brutal days of yore and moved a letter-writer of 1785 to say, "I believe most of the young Thetford people are dissipated, simple, ignorant young men (what a nice 'derangement of epitaphs'!) that mind nothing but the low and insipid sport of cock-fighting." From this point, into the town

across the Town Bridge, the road narrows amazingly, and, arrived at the "Bell" inn, and St. Peter's Church, it wears almost the appearance of a lane.

XXXIV

The situation of Thetford and the history of the roads by which it is approached make an interesting subject of enquiry. All ancient accounts of Thetford agree in describing it as from the earliest times a place of great importance—a strongly fortified post and a seat of government.

The first mention of Thetford takes us back to the year 575, when Uffa, first King of the East Angles, made this his capital city, and called it "Theotford," by that name describing the situation of the place, lying secure against approach from the Suffolk side, behind a network of difficult fords across the marshes and many branches of the confluent rivers we now call the Ouse and Thet. Others had been here before him, but all that earlier story of Thetford is purely speculative. That it had an earlier history and was from very remote times a fortified post, the great prehistoric earthworks which guard the passage of the river amply prove. By whom, or by what race they were reared, who shall tell? But certainly Uffa and his Saxons found them here. The Romans, still earlier, had been astonished by them, but made haste to adapt the huge mounds to their own purposes. For the Romans were everywhere,

and to acknowledge their presence here it is not necessary to identify this as the *Sitomagus* of the "Itineraries." Camden considered Thetford to be identical with that Roman station, and thought the name derived from *Sit* or *Thet*, and *magus*, a great city; and many have been content to follow him, "the common sun whereat our modern writers have all lighted their little torches." Thus Bishop Nicholson, strong in satire upon Camden's copyists; but more modern writers have made flambeaux of their very own, and by the light of them have groped about to some sort of inconclusive opinion that *Sitomagus* was probably at Dunwich, on the Suffolk coast.

Thetford was at the very centre of the East Anglian realm, and therefore a place of great security. Thus it was that the Royal Mint was early established here and so continued, through the history of this one of the seven kingdoms.

For two hundred and sixty-three years East Anglia and England in general remained under Saxon rule. The kinglets were always at war with one another, and their boundaries, and even the numbers of their kingdoms, were ever changing, but it was not until 838 that an alien danger threatened them. It was in this year that the Danes first invaded the country, and were defeated at Rushford Heath. With that decisive result the land was left in peace for twenty-seven years.

In the meanwhile that most famous and most legendary East Anglian Christian king, the sainted Edmund, had succeeded to the throne, and had

reigned ten years when the terrible invasion of 866 befell. Then was fought the battle of Snarehill, which lasted for several days, and whose bloody memories were so vivid, even a hundred and fifty-four years later, that the Abbot of St. Edmundsbury founded a monastery on the spot, in honour of the thousands who fell on both sides. This, the Battle Abbey of its era, was in Henry VIII.'s time granted to Sir Richard Fulmerstone. The "Place" farm, an ecclesiastical building now used as a barn, and a training-stable for horses now occupy the site of what is locally called "The Nunnery."

The Battle of Snarehill was not conclusive. The invading Danes certainly occupied the town for the winter, but they would appear to have afterwards retired, and it was not until 870 that the crowning disaster came. In the spring of that year the Danes again returned, destroyed Thetford, and utterly defeated the army Edmund had drawn from every nook and corner of his kingdom. Edmund himself did not fall in that tremendous slaughter, but met with his martyrdom, as we have already seen, at Hoxne, some twenty miles away.

All over England the Danish invasion then spread. In Wessex even, where the reign of Alfred then began, that heroic king was for a time overborne by the heathen hordes; while Eastern England, with but few intervals, was for many years subject to fire and sword. Only the payment of a heavy tribute kept these pirates

away. When at length a number of Danish settlements had been made and the two races at last had begun to forget the bygone years, the mad folly of that King of All England, whom men called Ethelred "the Unready," devised in 1002, on November 14th, the feast of St. Brice, a general massacre of those Danish settlers. It was no worse measure than, time and again, those Northern foes had meted out to the Saxon people; but the folly was criminal, if the deed was not, for from those shores of Denmark came avenging hosts with Sweyn at their head. It was almost two years before he came, but with his advent the old miseries began to be re-enacted. Norwich was burnt, and Thetford felt the full force of his onslaught. But for the military genius of one Ulfcytel, himself the owner of a Danish name, but acting as the bulwark of East Anglia, Sweyn would at once have marched through the land. Ulfcytel, however, drove him back to his ships, and it was not until 1010 that he returned, and, defeating the still active Ulfcytel at the battle of Ringmere, burnt Thetford again to the ground. Elsewhere in England Sweyn was even more successful, and penetrating to Winchester and Bath, was proclaimed King in London in 1013. That same year he died and was succeeded by that Canute, who in the moral story of the flattering courtiers and the advancing tide has been made hateful in every elementary schoolroom. It was in battle with Canute in 1016, at Ashingdon, in South Essex, the valiant Ulfcytel at last fell.

With Canute's accession, however, the early blood-dyed history of Thetford reached its last page, and when the Saxon line of kings was restored with Edward the Confessor in 1041, the oft-burned town numbered 944 burgesses.

From that time, with but one short period in

GATEWAY, THETFORD PRIORY.

the reign of William the Conqueror, the town rapidly grew in importance. It became the site of the East Anglian bishopric in 1075, when the see was removed from Elmham, and although that much-moved Bishop's chair was again removed, to Norwich, nineteen years later, Thetford suffered little from that circumstance. If it ceased to be

technically a city, it was a great town and a very stronghold of the Church. Although it has now but three churches, it owned twenty, so late as the time of Edward III., and the ruins of many of them can still be traced, proving the truth of those old records that tell of them. Seven were on the Suffolk side. These we might call suburban, but of them only that of St. Mary-the-Less is now extant. Its big sister, St. Mary-the-Great, stood adjoining the Grammar School, but only fragmentary walls remain. This was converted by Bishop Arfast into the cathedral of those nineteen years. Elsewhere in and around the town the shattered and shapeless walls of old-time ecclesiastical buildings abound, and the ploughman who drives his furrow across fields that were once streets, turns up mediæval tiles with the lack of interest that comes of constant use, or fervently damns the occasional abbot's sarcophagus that dints his ploughshare.

With the Crusades Thetford declined in population and fortune. Why, we do not know. It is not reasonable to suppose that the people went off in a body to fight the Paynim in the Holy Land.

But the monasteries remained in being. Like the clinging ivy that flourishes even when the tree it has ruined is dead, they continued until Henry swept them away. They were four: that monastery, founded to commemorate the battle of Snarehill, which afterwards became a Benedictine nunnery; the Abbey, or Priory, founded by Roger Bigod in 1104; the Monastery of the Holy

Sepulchre, Earl Warren's foundation of five years later; and the Friary of St. Augustine, established by John o' Gaunt in 1387. Besides these were numerous hospitals, together with the Manor House and the King's Palace, used by sovereigns from Henry I. to James I.

The only approach to Thetford in very distant times was doubtless by the Icknield Way, and for many centuries later that ancient track continued to be the chief road into and through the town on to Larlingford, where the existing highway from Thetford to Norwich falls into it. If we take up the line of the Icknield Way where, on page 189, we left it, we shall find it pointing straight through the Gasworks to the three bridges that now span the parallel stream of the Thet, a nameless intermediate rivulet, and the Little Ouse. These are (doubtless from the immediate neighbourhood of what is even now called "the Nunnery") known as the "Nuns' Bridges," but one of them was formerly known as "Incelland" Bridge, and in that name we may perhaps find a distorted echo of "Icknield."

It is a pretty spot, and made romantic by its ancient story. You find it by tacking round the Gasworks, for which we need not claim any romance, and thence by a group of melancholy pines, where—at a point which was a junction of roads before this short two hundred yards' stretch of the Way was stopped up—a mound marks the site of "Chunk Harvey's Grave." One cannot look upon this more or less tragical spot with

reverence, for Harvey's grotesque name and the discarded boots and battered tin cans of the town that decorate his legendary resting-place forbid. "Legendary" is written advisedly, for not the most diligent of delvers into the past shall succeed in reducing Chunk Harvey to cold dates and exact records. But his story has a distinctly moral tone, and may be recounted as a warning to any would-be pirates now trembling on the brink of a lawless life under the Jolly Roger. According, then, to the received legend, Chunk Harvey was a sea-rover who, by strict attention to his piratical profession and by a prudent and saving disposition, managed early in life to secure a large fortune. He retired to Thetford, and might have become a churchwarden and died in every circumstance of comfortable piety had it not been for a former acquaintance who had cut many a throat with him in bygone days on the high seas, but now, reduced to his last stiver, came tramping through Thetford. By a cursed (or fortunate) chance, just according to how your sympathies lie, this broken-down bandit met his old comrade, and in the result blackmailed him long and successfully until his victim could endure it no more. When at last he refused to be bled any longer, the man betrayed him, and—to cut the story short—Chunk Harvey was convicted and hanged. He was buried here, amid the rejoicings of a virtuous populace, who—if you like to share the children's belief—were granted a Bank holiday and wound up the festivities with a display of fireworks.

THE "NUNS' BRIDGES" ON THE ICKNIELD WAY, THETFORD.

A little stretch of common land leads on to the "Nuns' Bridges." Thetford town is hidden as you approach, by the dense trees of the Spring Walk and by others on either side, growing luxuriant by favour of the water, and thus forming the strongest and the most grateful of contrasts with Thetford's situation amid wild heaths, bare and treeless, or planted only with the melancholy pine, and dotted here and there with gnarled hawthorns.

When this, now a side route into Thetford, was supplemented by that of the present main road over the "St. Christopher's," or Town Bridge, must be a matter of conjecture. We must not suppose, because that bridge was built only in 1697, there was no bridge or road up to the river and into the town before that time. Morden's map of Norfolk in 1695 does not mark one; but it is incredible that there should have been no direct communication across a not very broad stream between these Suffolk suburbs and the chief part of the town. On the other hand, the fact that a ducking-stool was erected on the "Nuns' Bridge" in 1578 would seem to prove that this was certainly then the chief approach, for the practice was to make the head-over-ears ducking of the scolds and shrews as public an exhibition of their shame as possible.

XXXV

THE most prominent hostelry at Thetford in coaching days was the "Bell," and it still occupies that geographical pre-eminence, even though its commercial importance has decayed. The "Bell," in fact, has never recovered from the blow dealt it in 1846, when the coaches ceased to run, and overhangs the narrow street, its great courtyard a world too large for the diminished traffic.

Lord Albemarle has a good deal to say of the "Bell" in his book of reminiscences. As a young man, travelling about 1810 between London and Elveden Hall, then in the possession of his family, he sometimes, in common with the sporting youngsters of that age, had the opportunity of driving the Mail for a stage or two. It was not always, indeed, an opportunity desired by the passenger who shared the box-seat with the coachman, for those who sought that glorious elevation, paying rather heavily for the privilege in the form of a tip to the yard-porter who reserved the seat and in a series of drinks to the successive Jehus who drove, were, much more often than is generally supposed, quite content to let the coachman do the driving. Comparatively few were ever to be found skilled in the difficult art of guiding four horses, and not every box-seat passenger was eager to "take the ribbons." The coachmen, on any quiet stretch of road, were

THE "BELL INN," THETFORD, AND ST. PETER'S CHURCH.

generally more keen to make the offer of "taking 'em for a bit" than their passengers to accept, for those professional occupants of the box were, in the well-known etiquette of coaching, always sure of half a sovereign as a tip from the sportsman who "took 'em," and when, from sheer timidity, their offer was not accepted, they were indignant, especially if some one who *would* have "taken 'em," and tipped accordingly, was elsewhere on the coach. Under such harrowing circumstances a coachman generally felt himself to be defrauded. "What are you 'ere for, then?" asked such an one of his box-seat passenger who had declined the honour and glory—and the danger; and when, after a halt for refreshment, the passengers resumed their places, this one who would not have distinction thrust upon him found his place taken by a dashing fellow who, a few miles down the road, landed them all into a ditch and most of them into hospital.

But to return to the youthful Keppel. "At the 'Bell,'" he says, "I used to sit down to a most sumptuous breakfast of eggs, buttered toast, fried ham, etc., and all for love, and not money. I was a prime favourite with the landlady, Betty Radcliffe, so much so that for the many years that, as man and boy, I frequented her hostelry, she would never accept a sixpence from me. Betty wore a high cap, like that in which Mrs. Gamp is seen in Dickens's novel, and a flaxen wig which she appeared to have outgrown, for it ill-concealed her grey hairs. Being the sole proprietress of

post-horses into Norfolk, she assumed an independent demeanour and language, to which every one was compelled to submit."

Betty Radcliffe is still a Thetford legend, and the tale is yet told how, when the Duke of York was paying for his post-horses, on one of his visits to a neighbouring squire, she jingled the coins in her hand with a humorous air of satisfaction, and said, "I may as well take a little of your money, for I have been paying your father's taxes for many a long day."

The church of St. Peter, adjoining the "Bell," is locally known as the "Black Church," from the more than usually dark colour of the flints of which its tower is built. It is not so old a tower as it looks, for it was built so lately as 1789, in imitation of the then almost forgotten Gothic style. The imitation, making due allowances, is not so bad. The footpath here is so narrow that a projecting buttress has been cut back to give room to pass.

The older one grows, and the nearer to occupancy of the churchyard, the less does one care to frequent such places; and besides, those of Thetford are of no great interest. But the historian's duty compels a search for the farcical rhymed epitaph stated, in many collections, to be "at Thetford." It is—but read it for yourself :—

My grandfather was buried here,
My cousin Jane, and two uncles dear;
My father perished with a mortification in his thighs,
My sister dropped down dead in the Minories.

But the reason why I am here, according to my thinking,
Is owing to my good living and hard drinking;
Therefore, good Christians, if you'd wish to live long,
Beware of drinking brandy, gin, or anything strong.

Many a pilgrim in search of such mortuary extravagances has sought this; all of them sent on a fool's errand by the original wag who invented it, and by the copyists of other people's collections who have performed the easy task of copying without verifying. Thetfordians disclaim it altogether.

Every traveller come to Thetford has dwelt at length upon its mazy streets, and how infallibly those who are not Thetford born lose themselves in them and walk in circles. It is indeed difficult to find one's way about Thetford. A far-off echo of the desperate old times, sounding across the void of a thousand years, was the old name of what is now called Guildhall Street. Until fifty years ago it was still, as it had always been, "Heathenman Street," a title alluding to the march of the pagan Danes; and I would the name were restored, for romance is evident in that old name.

It is down Guildhall Street, behind the recently rebuilt Guildhall, that the old Friends' Meeting House stands, in Cage Lane. That name marks where the old lock-up, or "cage," once stood. The Meeting House, now threatened with destruction, was in use by the Quaker community of the town until about 1865. It was built in 1696, seven years after the time of persecution

had been brought to a close by the Toleration Act of 1689. Those were humble days, and, newly freed from persecution and imprisonment for the mere act of meeting together, those early Dissenters were probably thankful enough even for this little cottage of one room. It is built of a mixture of flint, brick, and chalk, and heavily thatched. In common with almost every other building of any considerable age in Thetford, there may be found among those varied materials large pieces of freestone, the spoils of the ancient religious houses of the town. The Quakers are a hard-headed, rather than a sentimental, body; else they would not have abandoned this historic cottage, which has since 1865 been used successively by the Plymouth Brethren and the Salvation Army, and is now ruinous.

Past the Guildhall, a street leads directly to what was the gaol in those days, still regretted in the town, when the Assizes were held alternately at Thetford and Norwich. The gaol is now merely a police-station. Thetford lost its Assizes in 1833, its Parliamentary representation in 1868, and all its old fairs have decayed; so that the only excitement in the lives of the worthy burgesses is when an itinerant circus pitches its tents in the neighbourhood. The road-life between Thetford and Norwich had its own picturesqueness before 1833, for prisoners were conveyed in waggons to be tried here or at Norwich, and Attleborough March Fair, from being generally held while the Assizes were in progress, was

popularly known as "Rogues' Fair." There were sometimes in those days "maiden" Assizes at Thetford, but the term had a different signification from that it now bears. In those times a "maiden" Assize was one of those exceptional occasions when no one was condemned to death. Things were not at the last so bad as in earlier times, when the Manor Courts, the Ecclesiastical Courts, and the Mayor's Court were competent to inflict the death penalty, but it was still a barbaric age in 1824, when twenty-six prisoners were condemned to death, some for sheep-stealing.

Thetford Gaol still remains, an appropriately grim building of black flint, with representations of fetters over the doors, together with the town arms and an inscription stating that "This Gaol was enlarg'd in the Year 1816." Opposite is a great brewery of old standing. It would be pleasing to the teetotal interest to establish a connection between the building of the brewery and the enlarging of the gaol as cause and effect, but it cannot be done.

This is the quaintest corner of old Thetford, and abounds with inns. Among these is the sign of the "Good Woman." It is at the rear of the row of houses of which the "Good Woman" forms part that the most interesting thing in Thetford is to be seen. This is the giant earthwork, to which a passing reference has already been made, the earthwork known as "Castle Mound," or, in a manner better befitting the dignity of it, "Castle Hill." It is not the tallest

of the mysterious tumps England has to show, for it is but 100 feet in height, and its bigger brother, "Silbury Hill," on the Bath Road, is 70 feet taller, but it rises more abruptly from the level, and looks all its height, while Silbury Hill is spread over a wider base and ascends more gently. No one knows what race of men raised this tremendous heap of chalk. They heaped it up, undoubtedly, for purposes of defence, and as the pilgrim painfully climbs its steep and now grassy sides, principally on hands and knees, he is fain to acknowledge that an ancient enemy seeking to storm this stronghold would have had an almost impossible task.

The Castle Hill stands on a considerable space, its circumference measuring 984 feet. Three deep grassy trenches and two steep ramparts guard the foot of it, and the defenders at the summit found shelter in the deep cup-like depression, resembling the crater of a volcano. A bygone generation planted a clump of trees in this hollow, and they have now grown to noble and striking proportions. There was never at any time any building on this defensible earthwork, which was itself the "Castle."

The place stands in a beautiful spot on the eastern outskirts of the town, in the midst of noble trees and luxuriant turf. Unlike the great majority of the prehistoric earthworks noticed in guide-books and in the learned papers of archæological societies, it is generally interesting, and appeals to the eyes even of those uninstructed in archæology.

CASTLE HILL, THETFORD, IN 1848. *From an old print.*

That the Castle Hill was built for defence there can be no doubt, and its height, its steep sides, and the defensive earthworks that describe a rude half-circle around it give the measure of the fear its unknown builders had of their unknown enemy. They who reared these works were terribly scared. That enemy was evidently expected to come out of the south, for the

CASTLE HILL, THETFORD.

great mound stands on the northern side of the rivers and marshes which then spread over all the neighbouring flat meadows; and the horns of the semicircular ditches and ramparts at that time touched those kindly frontier waters. The Icknield Way, already traced to the "Nuns' Bridges," came across that watery waste and pursued its course into Norfolk under the shoulder of the mysterious mound.

XXXVI

I AM quite sure that if any old Thetfordian were permitted to return to his native town, he would find it, by contrast with other times, astonishingly dull. No badgering of Quakers, no cock-fighting, no scold-ducking, and no more bribery and corruption at Parliamentary elections—or at least it is not done in the old approved style, when at every inn you could call for what you liked, get riotously, hilariously, and finally dead, drunk, and have the cost of the debauch chalked up to the Duke of Grafton down at Euston, whose pocket-borough Thetford was. Alas! the borough representation went, a whole generation ago, and the town is merged into a mere county division. Dull, sir! Why, damme, yes. Not even an Assize and the spectacle of a hanging in these days, and the coaches and the post-chaises that used to awaken the echoes of the streets at night are all resolved into firewood. As for Thetford ever having been a fashionable resort, the world certainly has forgotten all about it, and when you hint it was so, looks incredulous. But the Spring Walk remains as a voucher for that short-lived fashionable patronage. Most delightful of all the roads and paths in and near Thetford, the Spring Walk owes its existence to that hope of erecting the town into an East Anglian rival of Tunbridge Wells, Bath, or Cheltenham, which

was a feature of local history from the early part of the eighteenth century until the first quarter of the nineteenth had almost run its course. That was a time when every locality fortunate enough to possess waters impregnated with iron or sulphur to the requisite degree of nastiness strove desperately to attain the position of a Spa. Relics of that old-time eagerness to secure a share of the fortunes of Bath and other well-established resorts of this kind are plentiful all over England, and at most places where, owing to subterranean complications, with horrible chemical results, the water is not fit to drink, you shall now find the neglected and decaying Pump Houses and Spa Rooms then hastily built, with the hope of attracting the fashionable invalids and hypochondriacs of the day. It was in most cases a hope doomed to disappointment, for invalided fashion is gregarious, and then, even more than now, loved to herd together, to discuss symptoms and exchange scandal. Even had it been of other mood, there was not, a century ago, sufficient fashion to fully furnish a tithe of those forlorn hopes; so that many Spas of even supreme nastiness which should otherwise have secured success, failed to attract visitors in sufficient numbers to make the enterprise remunerative.

The chalybeate waters of Thetford were known so early as 1714, and were slightly tinged with iron and moderately tonic. Arising from springs on the north bank of the Upper Ouse, they were

in local repute long before the necessity arose for every medical man to have his pet curative resort, and might have remained obscure had it not been for one Professor Accum, who, as an early nineteenth-century boomster, began to send patients to Thetford, long before that century was out of its teens.

Thetford rose to the occasion. In 1818 the Mayor at his own expense constructed a river-side path leading to the "Spring House," and planted it with those plane-trees which have grown into the delightful avenue that now forms his best monument. In August of that year the spring was opened to the "free and unrestricted use of the poor," and the sick, and large numbers of all classes flocked to it. Still larger numbers were attracted in 1819, when Professor Accum published a work on the virtues of the Thetford waters. Success seemed assured. The water was even bottled and sent, carefully packed, to all parts, as a panacea for dyspepsia; but it was when these springs failed to cure ophthalmia, rheumatism and broken bones, and to work other impossibilities, that failure came and fond hopes withered and decayed. The public expected miracles, but there has been nothing of a miraculous nature in East Anglia since the marvellous times of Edmund, King, Martyr, and Saint, when credulity, faith, and the imagination of the monks went hand in hand, and produced astounding results; and so the Thetford Spa presently ceased to be. Even those

dyspeptic patients who derived, or thought they derived, benefit from the bottled waters fell away when they found they had long been humbugged by a number of practical humorists, who, combining a hateful cynicism with an abominable laziness, bottled off their healing draughts from other and handier, but quite ineffective, places.

Thetford at this day shows no prominent signs of its old Spa. The "Bath," or "Spring," house remains, but it is now a private residence, and few know or care to enquire, the origin of that beautiful plane-tree avenue leading beside the river to the "Nuns' Bridges."

Thetford in these times of ours is a very sober place indeed, has given up all attempts to attract the fashionables, and relies for its prosperity upon Burrell's engineering works, where you can buy a beautiful traction-engine any day, and upon the Pulp Mills, which turn out unbreakable domestic articles in a wholesale manner calculated to make all interested in the manufacture of china and glass wish they had chosen some other trade.

There have been Thetfordians in the past to do wonderful things and make some little stir in their day. Let us begin with the smallest of them. In 1782, "Robert Bartley, of Thetford," then in his sixty-third year, is recorded to have walked the eighty-one miles to London in twenty-four hours, and to have walked back the following day. He died, aged sixty-six, in 1785.

There were some excellent walkers at that time, for in 1813 the Thetford Volunteers performed a remarkable feat of endurance. They marched the fifty miles to Yarmouth in one day. Fortunately, no enemy was there, else those exhausted pedestrians might have fared ill.

But this is trifling with biography. Thetford's most famous—or at least most notorious—son is Tom Paine.

XXXVII

They still show you—if you are persistent enough to at length find those who know or care anything at all about it—the birthplace of Tom Paine, in White Hart Street, but it must be confessed, gladly or with regret—one is not quite sure which emotion is pre-eminent—that Paine, that stormy petrel of late eighteenth-century politics, has quite faded out of popular recollection in this his native town. Who, anywhere, knows nowadays much more about Tom Paine than that he was the author of a work, "The Rights of Man" which no one ever reads nowadays and therefore is generally thought to be much worse than it really is? For the rest, there remains a vague impression that he was a "wicked" person, and, above all, not "respectable," which last consideration, of course, sufficiently deters the mass of people from seeking to learn anything about him. Yet in his day he was a most remarkable person, and exercised an enormous influence.

Tom Paine—no one ever seems to have called him "Thomas"—was born in 1737, the son of a Quaker staymaker. They were quite humble people, the Paines, and their household so dull and cramped that Tom, early a rebel against authority, ran away from home in his nineteenth year and went for a sailor. He fought on board the man-o'-war *Terrible* in 1756, but authority, stalking rampant, so to speak, on the quarter-deck, was, of course, not at all to his mind, and he left the Navy. Turning then to his handicraft of staymaking, he is found, a fleeting figure of unrest, in London, Dover, and Sandwich. He married in 1759, and his wife died in the following year.

Staymaking seems then to have lost all attractions for him, for in 1761 he succeeded in obtaining the modest appointment of supernumerary officer in the Excise, and was stationed in this his native town. How *very* modest that post really was may be sufficiently explained when it is said that the pay was £50 a year, and find your own horse! If that was an advance upon his earlier employment—why, then, staymaking must have been a poor thing. Paine does not seem to have taken his duties very seriously. Could any one, at the price? So, after he had been transferred to stations at Grantham and Alford, he was at length, in 1765, dismissed for neglect. The neglect was rather serious, consisting as it did in filling up returns of examinations he had not made.

Two years of wandering followed. Staymaking

at Diss and ushering in London filled in the time until 1767, when by some strange chance he secured another appointment in the Excise. This billet would have taken him to Grampound, in Cornwall, but that was too far West, and so he held off until the following year, when a similar post offered at Lewes. There he lodged with a tobacconist, who died the following year, and two years later Paine married his late landlord's daughter. She and her mother opened a small grocery business, and Paine contributed his small share towards keeping up the establishment. But it was not in the scheme of life laid down by the Fates for Paine that he should be allowed to jog comfortably on through an obscure provincial existence of this humdrum nature. He became a noted figure in local political debates, and in 1772 the excisemen, who had long chafed under a combination of arduous work and small pay, found in Paine a champion who could display their grievances to advantage. He wrote and issued a pamphlet, setting forth their circumstances and demands, and eventually found himself dismissed from the service. He petitioned the Board of Excise for reinstatement, but they had no use for firebrands, and his appeals were disregarded.

Meanwhile, domestic differences had been at work, and that lack of conjugal agreement it has been left for modern times to gracefully term "incompatability of temperament" had caused a more or less amicable separation.

This general upheaval and ruination of Paine's

little world sent him drifting to London, where he met Dr. Franklin, who found him eager to try his luck in what were then the North American Colonies, and so gave him introductions to Philadelphia folks who might be of use. At Philadelphia he landed, accordingly, in 1774, and presently found his way into an editorial chair, at a salary of £50 a year, which we may perhaps look upon as an advance, because he certainly had not to support a horse, as well as himself, out of it, as in old Excise days.

He had reached America at a critical juncture of affairs. The Home Government had exasperated the colonists to the last degree by seeking to tax them in support of an Exchequer depleted by the world-wide warfares not long before brought to a conclusion. It mattered nothing that those wars had been fought for the very existence of England and her colonies alike: the New Englanders were not patriotic when their pockets were touched, and would not pay, and the Home authorities tactlessly insisted that they should. The result was armed rebellion, an inglorious war, and the independence of the United States. In all the many and involved political intrigues of the rebellion and the setting up of the new nation Paine had a part, and even did some service for the revolted colonists in the field. But it was as a negotiator, wire-puller, and general go-between he shone. From his trivial editorial throne he raised himself into the status of a personage by pamphleteering, and conducted himself as an equal

with Washington and the other leaders. Nay, more; it was he who, seeing how eager France was to aid the colonies against England with men, munitions of war, and in diplomatic ways, suggested and did actually in most skilful manner, negotiate a loan from the French Government to the States. For these services he was granted a salary of $800, equivalent to £160. Clearly negotiators were cheap in America in those days! But although he wrought such yeoman service to the cause, his fellow-revolutionaries did not love their Paine. He stood for negation in everything. Kingdoms, principalities, and powers, aristocracies and religion were as naught to him; while, for the most part, the successful colonists had no quarrel with anything but the British Government. They were pious and God-fearing: he was an atheist. Washington and his lieutenants were essentially of the aristocratic class, and with the prejudices of their order: Paine was—as modern slang would put it —"no class," and it is clear that although his associates were glad of his lucid and pungent pen, they were not desirous of close association with him.

Paine returned to England, in 1787, and made acquaintance with Fox and others of those who, had they not been blinded by political animosities, must needs have looked upon him as what he really was, a traitor to the land of his birth. By this it will be seen that the "Pro-Boers" of modern times are no novel phenomena: they have always existed as "pro" something or other likely to be injurious to their own country. It is rather a pity,

when you consider it, that Paine was not properly hanged when he set foot again on these shores; but he was not molested until the second part of his atheistical book, "The Rights of Man," was published, in 1793. *Then* he had to flee the country, a fugitive from the wrath of a nation that could endure a traitor, but found it impossible to forgive one who denied his God.

Where should such an one seek refuge but in Paris? There he became "Citizen Paine," and consorted with Marat, Robespierre, and others; publishing his "Age of Reason" in midst of that hurly-burly of revolutionary jealousies. The victory of one party and the downfall of another brought him in that land of liberty an unexpected introduction to a Parisian dungeon, where he lay for ten months, and narrowly escaped the guillotine. It was only through the strong attitude taken up by his American friends, and by the false claim of his being an American citizen, that he became again a free man. The year 1798 found him still in France, and hoping much from that rising star, Bonaparte, in whose mind it is not at all improbable he planted the first thought of invading England. Bonaparte then stood for freedom, and Paine looked forward to "proclaiming liberty at Thetford" under his protection; but, alas for that beautiful dream! Bonaparte, the Republican general, became Napoleon the Emperor and autocrat, and it grew evident at last, even to Paine, that it was not by his aid this land of slaves and helots was to be set free.

And what did Thetford think of it all? It is rather grievous to acknowledge Thetford was so sunk in slavery that it did not recognise the fact, and desired to be let alone. It sat in chains and misery, all unconscious! Thrice unhappy Thetford!! Folk in the taverns and in the streets even expressed a contempt and dislike of "Tum Paine," and loudly proclaimed their earnest desire to duck him in the river that runs so handy, through the town. But Tom never came back, and so the community lost its projected sport. He returned to America in 1802, and did not linger to watch the fortunes of that flotilla Napoleon was at last fitting out for the conquest of England. Seven years later, in 1809, he died in New York, and was buried at New Rochelle, but the unrest of his life followed him beyond the grave; for Cobbett, himself a reforming Radical, but on slightly more suave lines than Paine, in 1819, as a hero-worshipper, exhumed his bones and brought them to Liverpool. Cobbett, twenty-three years earlier, had denounced him as "base, malignant, treacherous, unnatural, and blasphemous." There his stock of adjectives ran out, and he brought the indictment to a conclusion. How the satirical shade of Paine must have chuckled at this right-about-face!

When the available property of Cobbett's son was seized for debt, in 1836, these poor relics formed a part of his belongings. Thence they passed into the hands of a Mr. Tilly, but since 1844 have not been heard of.

So much for Paine. The street of his birth, the street that leads out of the town on the way to Norwich, is still old-fashioned. There stands yet the old "White Hart," and a handsome house of two pointed gables, once said to have been the

THE "OLD HOUSE," THETFORD.

"Fleece." Lower down, opposite the "Bell," a house now occupied by an ironmonger was once the "George"; and midway is a pre-eminently ancient building whose age is tacitly recognised as transcendent, in the name of "the old house," given it locally. Its timbered frontage probably belongs to the fourteenth century. Traces of an

old watchman's box remain, and dark traditions survive of a chain being stretched across the street at night, from this to the opposite house. Something more, perhaps, than tradition, for the staples from which the chain hung are still pointed out. No records remain to tell the why or wherefore of that chain, but we have only to recall the misty past again to find in the solitary position of Thetford, surrounded by heaths—and those heaths frequented, to put it mildly, by undesirables—much virtue in chains, and comfort unspeakable to the listening midnight ears of nightcapped burgesses in the watchman's resonant "Twelve o'clock, and a starlight night! All's well."

XXXVIII

When the modern tourist leaves Thetford, he does so without a thrill on the threshold, and the only thing to give him pause is the rather bewildering choice of roads on the barren-looking rise where the town ends. Every way leads to open heath, even now, but every turning does not, as of yore, bring you butt against a highwayman. I, for one, do not regret the disappearance of *that* feature of the old days, and am content to forego all such thrillful encounters.

Two miles out of Thetford one came in those old days to the toll-house. The old relic stood until 1902, and was something of a curiosity to the instructed in local lore, for it stood on the

boundary of the parishes of Croxton and Kilverstone, on those of the Hundreds of Grimshoe and Shropham and the South-West and Mid Parliamentary Divisions of Norfolk. In virtue of that last distinction the occupier had a vote in both divisions, and was a man greatly cherished and cultivated by parties when election-time drew nigh.

"BRIDGEHAM HIGH TREE."

In another two miles, nearing the fourth mile from Thetford, there stands, prominent by reason of its height and isolation on Roudham Heath, the tall black poplar known as "Bridgeham High Tree." The village of Bridgeham lies far away to the right, and nothing comes in view to distract the attention from this landmark. For a landmark it is, planted, according to the received local traditions, by the packmen who fared this lonely road in days before railways, and often lost their

way on these heaths in the trackless snows of winter, when every road in these wind-swept uplands disappeared and lay buried in that white winding-sheet. The High Tree is of noble proportions, and placed at the crest of an incline slightly raised above the general level of the heath. A number of scattered thorn-trees grow near.

A little distance beyond it, a scarcely noticeable track crossing the road and leading on the left hand athwart Wretham Heath to a level crossing, stands for that disused prehistoric road, the Peddar's Way. A woman who unlocks the gates for the passing stranger dimly remembers to have heard it spoken of as the "Pedlar's Way."

From here the rough and stumbly track leads for half a mile to the crest of the ridge, where a deep hole, known as the "Thieves' Pit," is the subject of a legend telling how, at some period unspecified, Illington Hall was plundered by a mounted gang who hid their booty here. Looking backwards from this commanding viewpoint, this is seen to be the most solitary of all the many heaths surrounding Thetford, and that despite the railway running through, with Roudham Junction in its midst. The usual picture of a junction is of a busy station, with bustling porters and crowds of passengers, but that of Roudham is a very different place. You will not find it in the railway guides, because, in fact, tickets are not issued to or from it, and

it is a little difficult to understand the existence of a station, as well as the actual junction of lines, in the heathland, off the road and away from sight of houses. But there it stands, and its signal-posts and station buildings are the only alien features of this hoary heath, where the relics of prehistoric man are found, where the curlews whistle down the wind, and that coastwise branch of the plover family, the ring-plovers, breed.

For Wretham Heath is one of the seven heaths in the neighbourhood, and in the only district of England, where the ring-plovers visit inland. They come here in spring, and are doubtless in sympathy with the place. In common with them, the black-headed gull loves the heath, and students of natural history tell us its sands, plants, beetles, and butterflies—and, in fact, the whole of its flora and fauna—are those of the coast. Away beyond that lonely junction is Ringmere, the identical "Hringmar" of the Heimskringla-saga, where the Battle of Ringmere, the last of those many bloodthirsty fights between Saxon and Dane, was fought, in 1010. Ringmere is a singular, nay mystic, pool, sometimes measuring seven acres, at others reduced to a puddle, and again in full flood and stocked with fish. It is now again absolutely dry. Other curious meres of this immediate district, with similarly strange vicissitudes, are those of Langmere, Fowlmere, and the "Devil's Punchbowl," a smaller but deeper lake, whose

white evening coronal of mist the fearful folk-lore of the rural folk has styled the "Devil's Nightcap."

There were yet others before Wretham West Mere, and Great Mere were drained, in 1851 and 1856.

The Padder's, or Peddar's Way, here plunges through a long avenue of pines, on its way to Watton. It is a solitary, and at times even an eerie place, for great livid fungi grow in its shade and curious tall toadstool things, shaped like half-furled Japanese umbrellas, dot the grass; while fairy rings are there for the beguilement of mortal man rash enough to stand within any one of their magic circles what time the clock strikes the hour of midnight. Then—well, then I don't know what might happen, and really am not courageous enough to make the essay. Whether the little folk merely fool you with fairy gold that, when the illusory moonshine kingdom of Queen Mab is replaced by matter-of-fact sunshine, turns to the sere and sorry leaves of autumn past; whether they addle your brains, or give you a tricksy wisdom that is not of this world, I do not know; but if the fairy rings were only potent enough to recall the past, bid yesterday return, make unsaid the lamentable word, undo the irrevocable deed—why then, who would not brave the mystic hour, and chance what might hap? Ah! then, what a place of resort this would be, and what crowds of clients the fairies would have! But

if all these things were possible, they would still be beyond our reach, for I am quite sure the company-promoters would get an option on the fairies and float them as a company, under the style of "Oblivion, Ltd." Puck would, of

THE "SCUTES," PEDDAR'S WAY.

course, join the board after allotment. No one under the financial status of a multi-millionaire would be able to purchase the fairy boons vended under these auspices, for such people have much they would only too dearly like revoked, and would outbid all others.

XXXIX

HERE the murmurous twilight course of the Peddar's Way through the avenue of pine-trees known as Dale Row marks the boundaries of the parishes of Roudham and East Wretham. By the elder among the peasantry it is still spoken of as "the Scutes"—*i.e.*, the Skirts; but it is quite certain they are ignorant why they so call it. It is interesting to recall the fact that feminine skirts are pronounced "skutes" in New York and other towns of the New England States of America, doubtless in a survival of the old East Anglian speech taken overseas in the early settlement of the North American colonies.

This East Wretham is the parish of that William Cratfield, "Rector of Wrotham, in Norfolk," who, as "a common and notorious thief and lurker on the roads, and murderer and slayer," in unholy alliance with one "Thomas Tapyrtone, farryer," had in 1416 plied the trade of highwayman on Newmarket Heath, and being charged with robbing a Londoner of £12, was, with his concubine, flung into Newgate, where he died. What became of his improper companion, or even of Tapperton, is unknown.

But the clergy around Thetford in times of old included several queer characters. There was Lowe, the curate of Rockland, who on January 12th, 1608, aided by the rector's wife,

murdered the Rev. Mr. James, the rector of that place. Lowe was hanged at Thetford and Mrs. James burnt at the stake. Again, in 1635, the rector of Santon Downham was charged with being "an alehouse haunter and swearer, being distempered with liquor, keeping malignant company, and calling the Puritans hypocrites."

Nay, not merely the clergy of this district,

THE RUINED CHURCH OF ROUDHAM.

but of broad Norfolk, might be made to figure in a *chronique scandaleuse*; and if we had a mind to it, we could end in modern times with that thirsty clerk who was found, very drunken, beside the river at Stratton Strawless, declaring he would drink that up before he left. He must have been like to that wondrous toper created by one of the loveliest slips ever made by a

reporter; who would strain at a gnat and swallow a canal; which we must allow to be a more heroic feat than swallowing the more usual camel.

Roudham Heath owes its name to the parish and village of Roudham. The village stood less than half a mile to the right of the road, but has in these latter days wholly disappeared, save for fewer than half a dozen cottages and the gaunt ruins of the great church. Roudham church owes its ruinated condition to the fire that burnt it in 1736, a disaster caused by carelessness on the part of plumbers at work on the leads of the tower. Tradition says funds were collected for the repair of the building, but the treasurer made off with them. Roudham's local industry was that of malting; but the place is a scene of desolation, punctuated and italicised by the two inhabited cottages that neighbour the ruins and look on to the almost impassable road. The place has now no church, no chapel, no charities, no shop, no pub, no anything; but it was formerly a large and populous village, with two inns—the "Dolphin" and "Three Hoops." Foundations of vanished buildings are still visible in some of the fields.

XL

Larlingford, a tiny hamlet on the Thet, in a dip of the road, long since became a misnamed place, for the ford is replaced by a bridge, itself of a

respectable age. Two miles beyond the old ford there existed in Ogilby's time, in the second half of the seventeenth century, a beacon on the right-hand side of the road, duly pictured on his road map as a cresset, or fire-basket, mounted on a post and reached by ladders; a contrivance eloquently

LARLINGFORD.

witnessing to the wild state of the road in those times.

A little way beyond the site of the old beacon, at Hargham—or, as the country folk have it, "Harfham"—cross-roads, stands a time-worn stone shaft, reared on equally shapeless steps. The country folk call this shattered stump of an ancient wayside cross "Cockcrow Stone."

It is only when exploring to right and left of the road, along the byways, that the stranger comes in touch with rural life. The great highway goes lonely, for mile after mile the country seems deserted; but, unknown to him who does not turn aside from the beaten track, villages cluster, like beads upon a string, continuously along the lesser roads. A little way back from these cross-roads of Hargham comes Hargham village, and then the village of Wilby, in whose church, recently restored, has been discovered, under one of the old floor-boards, a lady's hawking gauntlet some three centuries old. Framed and exhibited on the wall, it forms a trivial yet intimate link with the past.

But to reach the church and village one must pass Wilby Old Hall, a romantic building of red brick, with corbie-stepped gables, that peer darkly across the meadows. One cannot resist a closer glance, and the old place well repays that attention. It is now, and long has been, a farmhouse, but was built as a mansion somewhere about the beginning of the seventeenth century. It was when Elizabeth reigned, or in the first years of James I., that the hall first rose within the girdle of its moat: that moat only in part now remaining, but still plentifully stocked with fish. A family of Lovells probably built it; but the place soon passed from them into the hands of the Wiltons, of whom Robert Wilton, a Royalist colonel, had it at the time of the Civil War. Scratched with a diamond on a pane of one of

the old casement windows of an upstairs bedroom is the name "Elizabeth," with the date 1649. The surname is included, but is illegible. Perhaps it was this Elizabeth who inscribed the Latin lines on another window—lines that seemed to hint at some heavy sorrow. "Alas!" they said, when translated, "Alas! how can I tune my lute to a broken heart!" We may seek in vain for the personal sorrow that prompted this record; or

WILBY OLD HALL.

was it the outpouring of a loyal soul? for the year 1649, when the unknown Elizabeth inscribed her name on the other casement, was the date of the execution of Charles I.

Those lines, we say, *seemed* to hint, and they are thus spoken of because quite recently, when the house was the scene of a sale at auction and pervaded by strangers, some unknown person prized the inscribed pane out of its leaden setting

and made off with it. Invoking a murrain on all such, we come into the ancient market-town of Attleborough.

XLI

Attleborough, quiet enough on all other days of the week, wakes up and does a considerable business on market-day, although even that weekly fixture does not command the trade of sixty years ago, before the railway brought the better marketing of Norwich within reach. But the trade of the town is still large enough to support several large inns, a Corn Hall, and a long street of shops. It would be unprofitable to argue the origin of the "Attle" in the place-name, for it has already been discussed by Norfolk antiquaries without any light being thrown on it, excepting the fact that the name is shared with Attlebridge on the river Wensum, fifteen miles away. Some topographers, mindful of the fact that the youthful Etheling, or Saxon noble, afterwards Edmund, King of East Anglia, spent a year at this place in A.D. 856 in pious preparation for his kingly and saintly career, have thought the place to be named after him, Etheling-borough; while others are of opinion it enshrines the name of some otherwise unrecorded chieftain whose stronghold was the burh or mound that gives the "borough" termination. However that may be, Attleborough is a place of greater age than might be thought from a casual glance.

Nothing in it, except the great church, is of any high antiquity, for the College of the Holy Cross, founded by Sir Robert Mortimer late in the fourteenth century, has disappeared, and the church itself, a part of that religious establishment, although still very large, has been reduced from its original size. All this destruction took place in the time of Henry VIII., when such things were repeated at every monastery and religious college in the land. At that time the Mortimers, the ancient lords of the manor, had given place to the Radcliffes, then newly created Earls of Sussex, and Robert, the first Earl, who ruled at that period, lent a willing hand. One might almost suppose him to have been animated by a personal hatred of his forbears, for it is still recorded in the parish register how he busied himself in the work of demolition and tore up many "fair marble gravestones of his ancestors, with monuments of brass upon them, and carried them, with other fair good pavement, and laid them for floors in his hall, kitchen, and larder-house." He died in 1542, and was buried in the City church of St. Lawrence Pountney, London. In later years the bodies of himself and his son, with those of their wives, were removed to the church of Boreham, in Essex. With the grandson, the line of Radcliffes, Earls of Sussex, ended; and in that church their three marble effigies lie side by side, on one elaborate altar-tomb, fulfilling the threat, or prophecy, that in the third generation of that spoiler of the Church his race should become extinct.

These records of old time explain how it comes that Attleborough church tower is so oddly situated at the east end of the building. It was once at the centre of the cruciform church, but the choir being destroyed in that time of trouble, it is now, of course, immediately over what is now the chancel.

Standing beside the high road, the church is, of course, a very prominent object. It has a singularly beautiful north porch, containing an

ATTLEBOROUGH.

ancient wooden poor's-box. Under a slab in the nave rests that Captain John Gibbs of Charles II.'s time, who earned a kind of fame by his foolhardy feat of driving his chaise and four horses over the deepest part of the Devil's Ditch, on Newmarket Heath, for a wager of £500. The chancel is Norman architecture, the nave and aisles Decorated and Perpendicular. The pulpit is part of the spoil of one of the City of London churches, demolished in modern times, and the magnificent

rood-screen is now at the west end, painted white, decorated with the arms of thirty dioceses, and black-lettered with moral maxims from the Proverbs, the work of the Rev. John Forbie, vicar in the first half of the seventeenth century, commentator in the parish registers upon national and local events, and censor, in the safe seclusion of those pages, of his parishioners' characters. His favourable opinion of James I. is seen in the entry made when that monarch died: "It might be truly said of him, as in the Gospell, 'Never man spake as this man speaketh.'" John Forbie evidently did not dislike Scots pawkiness.

His *post-mortem* testimonial in 1625 to the landlady of the "Cock" inn—a hostelry still standing by the roadside at the entrance to the town—is hearty. "August 11th," he says, "there was buried Mary, the wife of Gilbert Greene, hostess of the 'Cock,' who knew how to gaine more by her trade than any other, and a woman free and kind for any one in sickness . . . and for answering (*i.e.*, standing godmother) to any one's child, and readie to give to any one's marriage." Surely, one thinks, it was ill sojourning at the house of one so accomplished in gaining more by her trade than any other. Did she accomplish it by overcharging her guests or diluting their drinks?

He records the death of one John Dowe, "an unprofitable tradesman of great estate." This, he says severely, and moved to verse by indignation, should have been his epitaph:—

> Here lyeth the Dowe who ne'er in life did good,
> Nor would have done, tho' longer he had stood.
> A wife he had, bothe Beautifull and Wise,
> But he ne'er would such goodness exercise.
> Death was his friend, to bring him to his grave,
> For he in Life *Commendam* none could have.

The situation of Attleborough, isolated on the lonely flats, surrounded by commons, must have been singularly aloof from the world in days of old. Up to the very doors of the townsfolk came the dangers of those far-off times, as we may perceive in the road that now leads to the railway station, but is marked on old maps as "Thieves' Lane." Where those thieves lurked, there now stand the respectable red-brick villas of modern times, with a "Peace Monument" of 1856 at the cross-roads, celebrating the close of the Crimean War, and at one and the same time recording the victories of that strife and acting as lamp-post, general gazetteer, and compendious milestone.

XLII

To Wymondham is our next stage, a flat six miles.

In midst of this level tract of country, where villages, and houses even, are few and far between, the wayfarer's eye lights upon a stone pillar on the grassy selvedge of the road, a dilapidated object that looks like a milestone. But as it occurs only three-quarters of a mile after passing the sixteenth stone from Thetford, it is clearly

something else, and inspection is rewarded by the discovery of this inscription :—

"THIS PILLAR | was erected by | the order of the sessions of the | Peace of Norfolk | as a gratefull | remembrance of | the Charity of | Sir Edwin Rich Knt | who freely gave | y^e^ sume of Two hundred | povnds towards y^e^ | repaire of y^e^ highway betweene Wymondham | and Attleborough | A.D. 1675."

Who, then, was this Sir Edwin Rich, whose charity was so necessary to the upkeep of these six miles of road between Attleborough and Wymondham? He was a distinguished lawyer, a native of Thetford, born in 1594. His monument in the church of Mulbarton, three miles from Wymondham, rich in moral reflections, surmounted by a large hour-glass, and further adorned with eulogistic verse written by himself on himself, quaintly tells us the circumstances of his birth and breeding :—

Our Lyef is like an Hower Glasse, and our Riches are like Sand in it, which runs with us but the time of our Continuance here, and then must be turned up by another.

To speak to God, as if men heard you talk,
To live with men, as if God saw you walk.
When thou art young, to live well thou must strive;
When thou art old, to dye well then contryve;
Thetford gave me breath, and Norwich Breeding,
Trinity College in Cambridge Learning.
Lincoln's Inne did teach me Law and Equity.
Reports I have made in the Courts of Chancery,
And though I cannot skill in Rhymes, yet know it,
In my Life I was my own Death's Poet;

> For he who leaves his work to other's Trust
> May be deceived when he lies in the Dust.
> And, now I have travell'd thro' all these ways,
> Here I conclude the Story of my Days;
> And here my Rhymes I end, then ask no more,
> Here lies Sir Edwin Rich, who lov'd the poor.

He died in 1675, at the advanced age of eighty-one, and not only left those £200 towards the repair of the road, but made the curious bequest to the poor of Thetford of the annual sum of £20, to be distributed for five hundred years, on every 24th of December, in bread or clothing. Why he should have limited his charity to a mere five centuries does not appear, nor does it seem to be clearly understood what is then to become of the property of Rose Hill Farm, Beccles, whence the income is derived. Perhaps he thought the end of the world will have come by that time.

It will be observed that Sir Edwin was a prudent as well as a pious man. Desiring some recognition of his excellent traits and achievements, he judged it best to write the epitaph himself: and a very curious mixture of humility and pride it is. There were sufficient reasons for his leaving a bequest for the maintenance of this road, which was in his time an open track, going unfenced the whole twenty-nine miles between Thetford and Norwich, and plunged in the fourteen miles between Larlingford and Wymondham into successive bogs and water-logged flats. If we consult a large map of Norfolk and scan this district well, it will be seen that on descending from the uplands of Thetford Heath to the Thet at Larlingford the

road traverses a considerable district, veined like the leaf of a tree with the aimless wanderings of many streams, and dotted here and there with such meres, or marshy lakes, as those of Scoulton and Hingham. It is even now an oozy plain, but was then a veritable piece of fenland, where the bitterns boomed among the reeds, the corncrakes creaked, the great horned owls hooted, and the gulls screamed in unstudied orchestration. The last bittern—"bog-bumpers" the country-folks called them—long years ago was gathered into the natural history collections of rare birds, and the bass-viol bellowings of his voice are no longer heard after sundown. The great horned owls, too, are no more; but lesser owls still tu-whoo in the woods, and the screaming gulls of Scoulton yet startle the stranger as they rise, voiceful, in their many thousands from the mere.

In 1675, when Ogilby's "Britannia," that first, and most magnificent, survey of the roads, was published, this spot was pictured on his sketch-plan of this road as "Attleburgh Meer," and was apparently something between a bog and a lake. It stretched across the road, and to a considerable distance on either side. This was in the very year of Sir Edwin Rich's death, when his bequest became available, and we may suppose that this hindrance to travellers was abolished very shortly afterwards and the monument to his liberality erected here, on the very spot where that slough had once been.

From its old name of the "Portway," it is

obvious this road must have been in existence in very ancient times, but it is equally obvious it was early discarded for other routes, for Ogilby is the earliest map-maker to mark it, and Will Kemp, who seventy-five years earlier danced his nine days' dance from London to Norwich, went the less direct road to Norwich from Thetford by way of Rockland, Hingham, and Barford Bridge, which he would not have done had the way through Attleborough and Wymondham been passable.

Kemp, who was a low comedian, and, according to his own showing, spent his life in "mad Igges and merry iestes," wagered he would dance down all the way, and did so perform the distance in nine days jigging, with intervals for rest and entertainment in between: not a very difficult performance, even for that time, and even though it was winter when he did it. He tells us fully in his "Nine Days' Wonder" how, accompanied by his tabourer, or drummer, he skipped and joked the miles away, and gives the route he took, over Bow Bridge to Romford, Ingatestone, Widford, Braintree, Sudbury, Long Melford, and Clare, to Bury St. Edmunds. It was on a Saturday, at the close of his sixth day's dancing, that he entered Bury, and there, "by reason of the great snow that then fell," he stayed until the following Friday morning, February 29th. The distance between Bury and Thetford is really twelve miles, and so Kemp does not take full credit for this day's per-

formance when he tells us that "Dauncing that tenne mile in three houres," and leaving Bury shortly after seven in the morning, he was at Thetford soon after ten o'clock: "So light was my heeles that I counted the tenne mile no better than a leape."

Master Kemp jigged to some profitable purpose, for as many people came to see him as are attracted by the modern pedestrians who wear out so much shoe-leather on the classic miles of the Brighton Road; nor were the county magnates above patronising this Merry Andrew. Thus he reports, "At my entrance into Thetford the people came in great numbers to see mee, for there were many there, being Size time. The noble gentleman, Sir Edwin Rich,* gaue mee entertainment in such beautifull and liberal sort, during my continuance there, Satterday & Sunday, that I want fitte words to express the least part of his worthy vsage of my unworthines; and to conclude liberally as hee had begun and continued, at my departure on Munday his worship gaue mee fiue pound."

On that Monday Kemp danced to Rockland and Hingham. At Rockland his host at the inn was a boon companion, but stood a little upon his dignity, for he would not appear until he had shifted from his working day's suit; when, valiantly arrayed, he entered, hat in hand, with "Dear Master Kemp, you are even as welcome as—as—as—" and so stammering

* Father of the Sir Edwin, the benefactor.

until he found a comparison—"as the Queen's best greyhound."

"After this dogged, yet well-meant salutation," says Kemp, weakly punning, "the Carrowses were called in, and they drank long and deep. So merry did this convivial interlude make him that, although he was an extravagantly fat man, he insisted upon dancing off with Kemp; but two fields sufficed him, and then, breathless, bade his visitor "go—go, in God's name." So they parted. From Thetford to Rockland, Kemp had found "a foul way," and onwards to Hingham it was not only foul, but deep, and no one knew the road. There were twenties and forties, nay, sometimes a hundred people, in groups, come to see him pass, but of the way to Norwich they could tell him nothing. "One cried, 'The fayrest way was thorow their Village,' another, 'This is the nearest and fayrest way, when you have passed but a myle and a half.' Another sorte crie, 'Turn on the left hand,' some, 'On the right hand'"; but with it all he did at last reach Hingham, and on the next day through Barford Bridge reached Norwich.

It was a roundabout way, and Kemp would have found more publicity had he gone through the towns of Attleborough and Wymondham. But the people of Thetford had probably warned him of the bad way through those places.

Sir Edwin Rich's £200 probably did not suffice for anything beyond filling up that

ambiguous stretch of watery mud called Attleborough Mere, and thus we find, twenty-one years later, an early Turnpike Act, the Act of 1696, 7th and 8th of William and Mary, passed for the repair of the highways between Wymondham and Attleborough. This road is thus claimed by Norfolk antiquaries as the first turnpike road to be constructed in the kingdom, but that is a slight error, for the Act was passed merely for repair, and was antedated by thirty-three years, in the first of Turnpike Acts, that of 1663, which provided for the repair and turnpiking of the road from London to Stilton—the "Old North" and the "Great North" roads of modern parlance. If, however, we somewhat limit that claim, and declare this to be the first turnpike road in Norfolk, we shall probably be correct.

XLIII

Wymondham town, to which we now come, stands at the junction of many roads, and was long a centre, both of religious and trade activity. Strangers, uninstructed in Norfolk usage, pronounce the name as spelled, and thereby earn the contempt of those to the manner born, who smile superior; but when the East Anglian travels into Leicestershire and, arriving at *that* Wymondham, calls it,

after his own use and wont, "Windham," he in turn is made to feel outside the pale, for Leicestershire folk take full value out of every letter in the name of their Wymondham. The Windham family, of Felbrigg, near Cromer, who settled at that place in 1461, came from Wymondham and were possibly descendants of the Saxon Wymund after whom the town was named.

Wymondham is said to stand higher than the surrounding country, but such a statement, unilluminated by comparison, might be misleading. You do not climb exhaustedly up into it, nor in leaving drop sheer down into a corresponding vale: the difference, in fact, between the levels through which we have come and the heights we now reach is merely one of inches, and so slight that only a robust faith can believe in it.

Wymondham was the child of that great Benedictine Priory founded here in 1107, by William d'Albini, chief butler to Henry I., whose son became first Earl of Arundel, and was the hero of that very tall story which tells how the Queen Dowager of France fell in love with him when he was in Paris and offered him marriage. He refused that very flattering offer, because as a matter of fact he was engaged already to another distinguished lady; no less an one, indeed, than the widow of Henry I. "Earth hath no rage like love to hatred turned," says the poet, and the rage of the rejected

Queen was really a right royal, consuming, and devastating rage, quite worthy of the second line in that poetic couplet, which says, "Nor hell a fury like a woman scorned." She planned a visit to a lion's den, conveniently handy to the palace, and, when there, pretended to be frightened of that fierce beast. D'Albini said it was nothing, only women would be afraid; whereupon she pushed him into the den and came away, happy in the thought that if she could not have him, at least the other woman should not. But she mistook, for D'Albini, wrapping up his hand in his cloak, put his hand in the lion's mouth and—pulled its tongue out! He left it at the palace as a present for the Queen, and then returned to England, became known as William of the Strong Hand, married the Dowager Queen of England, and lived happy ever after. That breed of lion must early have become extinct, for the exploit has never since been repeated.

Wymondham Priory, or Abbey, was, of course, brought to an end in the Eighth Harry's time, and is now a mass of ruins. The existing noble church was even in early days parochial and built on to the west end of the monastic church, whose only important surviving fragment is the great eastern tower, whose two octagonal upper stages, with shattered windows, look so weird and unaccountable beside the even greater western tower. The "two towers to one church" have indeed a gloomy and heavy nightmare-like

effect in certain lights, and it was not without a grim sense of impressiveness that the revengeful Government of 1549, at the close of the peasants' rebellion, hanged one of its leaders, William Kett, higher than Haman, from the summit of the western tower.

The nave of the great church, incomparably the finest example of Norman architecture in

WYMONDHAM CHURCH.

Norfolk, after the nave of Norwich Cathedral, has a Perpendicular clerestory, is flanked by Perpendicular aisles, and roofed with a noble open timbered roof of East Anglian character, decorated with the usual serried ranks of angels with outstretched wings.

But it is not of architecture, even though ranking with the noblest, that we must talk here, but rather of that strenuous flesh and

blood which, although long resolved into dust, gives to Wymondham the interest of living, breathing—aye, and hating and fighting—men, who fought and failed and died the death for their fellow-men in this fair land of East Anglia, more than three hundred and fifty years ago.

That rebellion for which William Kett suffered here, and his brother Robert from the battlements of Norwich Castle, was the very natural revolt of the Norfolk peasantry from the rapacity and selfishness of the landowning class, who sought to enclose the wide-spreading commons where the peasants' cattle and geese freely pastured. There were other rural grievances, but of a minor kind. No one of them was new when the trouble broke out, but they had at length, after the smouldering discontent of years past, come to such a pass that but very slight excuse was needed to set Norfolk in a blaze. Already, nine years earlier, a certain John Walker, of Griston, had said, "It would be a good thing if there were only as many gentlemen in Norfolk as there were white bulls," and this remarkable expression of opinion was rendered the more impressive by the favour it found among the country folk, who passed it from mouth to mouth with every sign of approval. Some rhymester, too, had been at work, and produced this prophetic verse:—

> The country gnoffes, Hob, Dick, and Hick,
> With clubs and clouted shoon,
> Shall fill the vale of Dussin's Dale
> With slaughtered bodies soon.

Dussin's Dale was, and is, outside Norwich, and the picture of a rural revenge was thus presented to the rustics, who had long suffered from manorial encroachments.

The initial incidents of the outbreak happened upon this very road from Wymondham into Norwich, when the new fences erected by a local landowner upon Attleborough Common were demolished on June 20th, 1549. A fortnight later new hedges at Morley and Hethersett were destroyed. The destruction of those at Hethersett brought about the rising. It seems that the land-grabber of that place was one Serjeant Flowerdew, between whom and the Ketts of Wymondham there was a violent enmity. The Ketts were substantial folks, engaged in tanning. It cannot be said that they were blameless, for they, too, had enclosed; but had set the crowd on to destroy Flowerdew's landmarks without considering their own case. The Serjeant naturally retorted by instigating the rustics in turn to level and tear into fragments the hedges and palings of the Ketts, who in the meanwhile seemed to have found salvation, for they not only permitted this work of vengeance on their own illegal enclosures, but heartily joined in it themselves. When this work was completed, and having thus proved their sincerity, the two brothers headed the mob back to Hethersett and destroyed what remained of Flowerdew's enclosures; marching on to Cringleford and meeting the High Sheriff, who had heard of these riotous proceedings, and now

admonished the people to return home. So far, however, from doing so, they put the Sheriff to flight, and, boldly setting forth upon an armed movement for reform, laid waste an enclosure beside the approach to Norwich, and, in defiance of the Mayor, marched round the city, climbed to the high ground of Hellesdon, and, reaching Mousehold Heath, pitched their camp there.

XLIV

Some years earlier a short-lived but significant movement had been set afoot by one self-styled "John Amend-all," whose name is sufficient earnest of there being wrongs grievously calling for justice to be done. It had then been said that three or four stout fellows, riding overnight through the towns of Norfolk, with bell-ringing and exhortations to rise, would by morning have collected 10,000 men, and it was now perceived that this had been no idle talk; for 16,000 peasants joined the camp on Mousehold Heath, whence the Ketts and the leading spirits despatched a very moderate and fair-minded petition to the King for redress of their grievances.

Norwich, as the place of residence of many landowners and, as a manufacturing centre, quite out of sympathy with the country people, was meanwhile practically invested by the rebels,

who from the commanding heights of Mousehold intercepted everything going in or coming out. There for more than a fortnight they lay, the summer weather in alliance with them, and with raiding parties looting cattle and provisions from all quarters for the feeding of this rustic host, which by this time had increased to 20,000.

Never did rebellion begin in more orderly fashion, for the Ketts, with their chaplain, Conyers, held open-air court on the Heath, and conducted things decently and in order. Food they were obliged to seize, but no violence and no robbery were permitted, and had the Government returned an answer showing any disposition to relieve the peasants from the landlords' exactions and aggressions, all would have been well. But vague promises, coupled with an offer of pardon for all concerned if they would first disperse and return to their homes, was all the satisfaction they received; and Robert Kett very rightly retorted to the herald who brought this message that "Kings were wont to pardon wicked persons, not innocent and just men."

Norwich then prepared itself for attack. The Bishop's Bridge over the Wensum, and the gate that then straddled across it, were put in a condition for defence against the expected descent from Mousehold, and pieces of cannon were mounted on the quays. The next morning the assault was delivered, and Kett's men, although many were slain by arrow-flights from the defenders, swarmed across the river and seizing

the guns, which had refused to shoot, were soon masters of the city. The Mayor, Mr. Alderman Codd, and the principal citizens were made prisoners and marched up to "Kett's Castle" on Mousehold, where they doubtless expected a violent death, Robert Kett sending down a message that any one coming to Mousehold should have a Codd's head for a penny. But that was only his humour, with nothing tragical at the back of it, for the worst that befell those prisoners was the being made ridiculous in a mock-court held on the Heath.

Norwich, in despair, welcomed the tardy arrival of some 2,500 men, chiefly Italian mercenaries, under the command of the Marquis of Northampton, but they made little impression, and one of the aliens, being captured, was stripped of his armour and hanged. On August 1st there was renewed fighting in the streets, and Lord Sheffield was killed, at a spot still marked by an inscribed stone. This first force sent against the rebels was by this time defeated with heavy loss, and Norwich remained in the hands of the victorious peasants until August 23rd, when a second expedition, cautiously feeling its way through disaffected East Anglia, appeared at the entrance of the city by St. Stephen's Gate.

It was not yet too late for the rebels to lay down their poor arms of bows and arrows, scythes, pikes, and bill-hooks, but, fired with the successful bloodshed that had given them

possession of the city, they rejected all offers made by the Earl of Warwick, commanding the strong force that now sought entrance. Three days' fighting, in the city and on the slopes of Mousehold, followed, with varying fortunes, and had it not been for the reinforcements of 1,100 German mercenaries, the rebellion might again have proved successful. As it was, however, their arrival turned the scale. It was at this juncture that, driven from the city, the peasants, remembering the old prophetic verse, moved to the hollow of Dussin's Dale on Mousehold, where they were to "fill the vale with slaughtered bodies." Here, they thought, if there was any truth in prophecy, they would achieve the final victory. It never occurred to them that there were two ways of reading that verse, and thus it was here they made their last stand and were cut down in hundreds, grimly fulfilling its words, if not its spirit. Three thousand five hundred of these poor countrymen were slain in this final struggle, and perhaps an equal number had fallen in the almost two months' fighting and skirmishing of this fatal rising. Thus it ended, but vengeance had yet to take toll of their number. The chiefs of the movement had held their court on Mousehold, under an oak they called the Oak of Reformation, and it was from its branches that nine of them were now hanged. Robert Kett was hanged higher still, three months later, when, after having been sent to London and flung into the Tower, he

was brought back and suspended from a gallows on the roof of Norwich Castle. Forty-five minor leaders were hanged, drawn, and quartered in Norwich Market-place, and some 250 of the others were plainly hanged, without these fiendish extras. The others, a disheartened mob of 12,000, having learned an unforgettable lesson, were bidden go home, for even the bloodthirsty rage of the victors might well be aghast at the prospect of meting out a like penalty to such a number; and moreover, counsels of prudence and expediency had something to say. "What shall we do, then?" asked the victorious Earl of Warwick, himself a Norfolk landowner, anxious how his lands should be kept tilled if they thus made away with the tillers of them, "What shall we do, then? Hold the plough ourselves, play the carters, and labour the ground with our own hands?" Good Heavens forefend such disaster!

Thus ended the great agrarian uprising of the mid-sixteenth century, and no man can with certainty say that it had any result. It sprang out of the void, and into nothingness it returned. But none the less it behoves us to honour those simple souls who laid down their lives for their immemorial rights in their common and free pasturages, who saw with a manly indignation the preserving of fish in the rivers, and that stopping up of public ways which even in the fierce publicity of our own times requires all the vigilance of a public society to keep in

check. Wymondham or Norwich should in public memorial honour the men who by their action said that these things should not be, if they could help, and in laying down their lives for the cause were as truly martyrs as any of those who died for conscience' sake in religion.

XLV

There are modern epitaphs to Ketts in Wymondham churchyard, whose fir-grown space admirably sets off and embellishes the gaunt towers. It is in the narrow lane leading to the church that the most picturesque inn of the town is to be found, in the sign of the "Green Dragon," a characteristic old English title and a very fine specimen of old English woodwork.

Most of the ancient inns of Wymondham have either disappeared, or have been rebuilt or otherwise modernised, but it was once, in common with most other mediæval towns clustered around great priories, a town of much good cheer and inordinate drinking. Piety and early purl went hand in hand in those days, and often staggered off to bed together in a very muzzy condition, or fell into the gutter, wholly incapable. Those were the days when the ascetic early use of the religious was forgotten, and before the Puritan rule of life had come into existence; and men were not less devout because they were drunken.

WYMONDHAM.

But the Priory guest-houses are all gone, and even the very pretty brew of "Weston's Nog," once famous in all this countryside, is no longer proclaimed over the old "Leather Bottle" inn. The sign of the bottle that once dangled over the door, and was inscribed with the name of that potent tipple, has itself disappeared.

The chief secular feature of the town is the Market House, an ancient building of timber frame and plaster filling, raised high above the level of the street, and entered by a lofty wooden stair. It has ceased to serve any market purpose, and now plays the part of a reading-room; and a very much larger room it is found, on inspection, to be than would from a casual glance at its exterior be supposed.

Among the decorative carving that covers the old woodwork of the Market House may be seen rough representations of spoons, skewers, tops, and spindles; allusions to the ancient staple trade of the town in articles of wooden turnery. It is a trade that has long wholly died out, but another old local industry—that of horsehair weaving—is still carried on. This trade was established somewhere about a century ago, and was once a great deal more important than now. One can readily imagine that Wymondham must have been particularly busy in the dreadful era of horsehair upholstery of sofas and chairs. The horsehaired chair or sofa belonged to the period of the cut-glass lustres that used to serve

as "chimney ornaments," and to the era of the "ornaments for yer fire-stoves" once sold in summer-time by itinerant vendors. Horsehair upholstery was very chilly, very sombre and severe, and afforded a particularly slippery and uncomfortable seat. One, happily, rarely sees those tomb-like sofas now, and the chairs are not often met; but when horsehair coverings disappeared from the household they found a lasting favour with railway companies, and still penitentially furnish many a waiting-room.

Thus the horsehair weavers at Wymondham even now find in their occupation a living wage. It is a cottage industry, and the old treadle looms may even yet be seen in work by any one curious enough to halt awhile and make due quest. They are cumbersome affairs of heavy wooden framing, rattle and clatter like the pots and pans of a travelling tinker, and give the minimum of output to the maximum of labour, the weavers having to perform the treadling, and at the same time to feed the shuttle with horsehair at every revolution of the machine. The local masters and the hair-cloth dealers of Norwich supply the weavers with the raw materials—so many pounds of hair—and it is brought back as a manufactured article, weighed, and paid for at the rate of $1\frac{1}{4}d.$ per yard. The fabric is black and white when it leaves the looms, and is dyed in Norwich.

An ancient house, with handsome timbered front, well cared for, and now in private

occupation, although said once to have been an inn, is one of the last objects to catch the eye in leaving the town. It bears the inscription, in bold raised letters: "*Nec mihi glis servus, nec hospes hirudo,*" which may be Englished, "I have neither the fat dormouse as a servant, nor the bloodsucker as a guest": a bold and cheering statement for such travellers of old as could read Latin, and who might feel inclined to test the smartness of the service and the freedom of the bedrooms from fleas and bugs.

XLVI

Hethersett, whose name means "Heather-heath," and is pronounced "Hathersett" in the local speech, is heralded along the open road by a solitary roadside inn with the sign of the "Old Oak." No ancient oak is within sight, but the accustomed pilgrim of the roads has not for years been exploring the highways and byways without having long ago arrived at the conclusion that there is a substantial reason for most things, even the names of inns, and so from that sign deduces an historic oak somewhere in the immediate neighbourhood. And surely enough, a short distance beyond the inn, on the left-hand side of the road, opposite the milestone that marks the twenty-second mile from Thetford and the seventh from Norwich,

there stands the gnarled and weatherworn trunk of what the country folk call "Kett's Oak," one of the several ancient trees that own the name, and traditionally said to have been one of the meeting-places of Robert Kett and his followers, and one of the scenes of his rough-and-ready sylvan court. But although oaks grow slowly, and although the tradition is an old one, handed down, unbroken, through the centuries, many will find it difficult to believe that a tree which must have been a considerable one when Kett and his followers foregathered here would not now have a greater girth than this.

The village green of Hethersett was enclosed, together with its large common, in 1800. The parish at that time claimed, and was allowed, a portion of the vast common of Wymondham, on the curious plea that it had buried, at the expense of the community, the body of a dead man found there and refused interment by the parish of Wymondham.

A local jape, which we may be sure will not willingly be let die, makes a play upon the name of Hethersett. It dates from many years ago, when the railway through the village to Norwich was new, and the train service incredibly slow. "Hethersett," cried the porters at the station when a train stopped on one of those weariful occasions. "Here they set," indignantly rejoined an old woman in one of the third-class carriages; "yes, and here they're likely to set!"

The old church of this scattered village looks down upon the road from its slightly elevated situation at a point where the remains of the old highway, re-modelled over two hundred years ago, may yet be seen. The name of "highway" in a descriptive sense is, however, wholly misleading, for it plunges down between the church and the present road in the likeness of a broad and deep ditch. This hollow way, with its overhanging banks, proclaims, more than anything else can do, the dangers of bygone times, when travellers "travailed," and a journey was really and truly what that word etymologically means, an expedition made by *day*. In these hollow ways lurked of old those outlaws who made even daylight travel perilous, and we can readily believe it was with dismay that benighted travellers saw the sun go down, and, simultaneously with its disappearance below the horizon, felt their courage ooze out at their boots. Trees and bushes now grow in the hollow where our forefathers of more than two centuries ago went so fearfully. It is long since it was used, and all who used it are gone, but Romance lives there, immortal, with the mud of years and the decaying leaves of autumn past.

The curious device of a dove and two serpents forms the weather-vane of Hethersett church. The living is in the gift of Caius College, Cambridge, and the vane displays the crest of Dr. John Caius, the re-founder of the College, officially and fully styled "Gonville and Caius."

It was in 1561 that the Heralds' College found

a crest for that worthy man: "a dove argent, bekyd and membred gewles, holding in his beke by the stalke, flower gentle in proper colour, stalked vert." "Flower gentle" is the old heraldic term for the wild amaranth, the "love lies bleeding" of old-fashioned gardens. In heraldic lore, it signified, as the grant of arms to Caius states, "immortalite that shall never fade." The two serpents denote wisdom and grace.

An amusing record of old country superstition survives in the proceedings arising out of the

HETHERSETT VANE.

theft of seven cheeses at Hethersett in 1797. A Mrs. Wissen, whose cheeses had mysteriously disappeared, instead of consulting a magistrate, a lawyer, or even the parish constable, went to a "cunning woman," or white witch, who, after much supernatural mystification, told her that the missing cheeses had been stolen by a woman with a prominent mark on her nose. Whether the "cunning woman" really meant any particular person or not does not appear, but there unfortunately *was* a woman, a Mrs. Bailey, so nasally

decorated, living hard by. The owner of the cheeses thus spirited away must have known the owner of that carbuncly, or otherwise, marked organ, but she seems to have been loth to act upon her information, or to do more than talk about it. At any rate, we do not hear any more of her; but the affair was not ended at that, for one Chamberlain, a local shoemaker, coming on one occasion into violent dispute with the unfortunate Mrs. Bailey, taxed her with the robbery, saying, "she showed her guilt in her nose and couldn't get it off." The owner of that compromising nose was naturally indignant, and brought an action for slander against the shoemaker at the Norwich Assizes; but the jury of country folk, equally susceptible to superstition, looked with suspicion upon that organ, and brought in a verdict for the defendant.

From Hethersett we make for Cringleford, and down the winding, tree-shaded descent past Cringleford church to the level where Cringleford mill sits serenely beside the weedy river Yare. Not only is the descent winding, but it is narrow as well. Yet, not so very long ago, it was narrower still, for a tablet in the wall at the foot of the hill tells us, rather grandiloquently, that—

THIS ROAD WAS WIDEN'D
13 FEET
ANNO DOMINI 1823.
GARRATT TAYLOR KNOTT,
SURVEYOR.

Prodigious! Careful pacing discovers the fact that it is only twenty-five feet wide even now. By what careful driving, or special interposition of Providence, did the Norwich Mail and the stage-coaches succeed in escaping disaster at this point, when the road measured only twelve feet in

CRINGLEFORD.

breadth? One accident is, indeed, recorded to have happened to a coach described as the "Newmarket Mail" in 1846. It was an overturn at Cringleford Gate, and was not very serious, the only results being a general distribution of bruises, and a broken arm and collar-bone.

The situation of Cringleford church is sufficiently pretty, but examination proves it to be uninteresting, and its churchyard deformed with huge polished granite memorials to the undistinguished rich. More satisfaction comes from a lazy sojourn in the sunlight upon the old bridge that spans the Yare. The subdued rumbling of the mill, the leisured loading of a waggon with sacks of flour, and the evolutions of a boat's crew among the weedy shallows of the Yare, induce a laziness which the certainty that Norwich is only two miles distant does much to intensify. It increases one's sense of the permanency of things to learn that the floury miller, who comes out and casts an approving eye upon his fat sacks, is but the latest of a long line of his trade who have been following the art of grinding corn, by aid of the river Yare, for nine hundred years. How do we know that? By the evidence of Edward the Confessor's Domesday Book, when the mill was stated to be worth 20*s.* a year, and by the Domesday Book of William the Conqueror, when the annual value had risen to 40*s.*

By all means let the pilgrim linger here, for he shall no sooner have climbed yonder rise, through that steep and narrow street of Eaton which is clearly visible from this point, than old Romance flies, ashamed, before the terminus of the electric tramways which reach out from Norwich and serve the discreet suburbs that now spread out from the city and threaten to absorb and transform Eaton itself.

It is a pleasant strip of valley thus set between the not very Alpine heights of Cringleford and Eaton; but here, in East Anglia, we call those hills which we should disregard in the precipitous West. The valley broadens out on the right, where it meets that of the Tase, and from that confluence the combined streams, under the name of the Yare, flow onward through a widening valley that eventually loses itself in flat marshlands, to Yarmouth.

This bridge that spans the Yare, and is continued as a causeway over the flat, often flooded, water-meadows, although of a considerable age, is but the successor of a very ancient structure, once in charge of a succession of hermits, licensed by the Priors of Norwich to reside here and to solicit alms of travellers crossing by it. A history of these worthies would be a very desirable thing, but it is not likely ever to be produced. They have mostly gone their ways unchronicled; all, indeed, save Roger de Brugge, whose memory only lives because he was so robustious and insistent a person. We have no means of learning whence Roger came, or what his real name was, "de Brugge" being merely "of the bridge." He flourished about 1390, and was a very troublesome person, who does by no means realise for us the usual picture of a hermit. Instead of living in a damp cell, unwashed and uncombed, in the verminous condition proper to all hermits of right feeling, he appears to have obtained a commercially good thing in his licensed wardenship

of the bridge, and to have employed toll-collectors of his own, who were not content with soliciting alms, but demanded money at the point of the cudgel of all those whom it seemed safe to threaten in that way. Unfortunately for one of these eremitical under-strappers who did their soliciting with the persuasive advocacy of a big stick, he tried the method with a man who proved to be a soldier, unused to taking treatment of that kind quietly, and who punched him in the eye, stole his money-pouch, and dropped him into the river, where he was drowned, much to the consternation of his companion, who, early in the proceedings, had beaten a retreat to Eaton, whence he saw all these developments. Roger de Brugge, who was an absentee hermit, and lived amid much evil company at Norwich, was deprived of his post, which was given to another, and, let us hope, more worthy person.

The name of Cringleford has puzzled many. Blomefield thought it meant "Shingleford"; some moderns think it derives from Kringel, said to be Norse for a curve or loop, and point to the many-looped windings of the Yare; but we can never know.

The meaning of Eaton is, however, self-evident. The place is first cousin to all the other Eatons and Etons (sometimes, I am ashamed to say, they are spelled Heaton, which is of course a h'error) in this country: places that obtained their name, as this does, from being situated beside streams. Eatown, the "water town," is the

signification of the name, and Eaton here dabbles its feet in the overflow of the Yare, just as Eton next Windsor does in that of the Thames, or the Cheshire Eaton in the overrunnings of the Dee.

Here, when once up the rise through Eaton village street, past the Dutch-like "Red Lion," the old highway to all intents and purposes ends, and it is only a suburban two miles, travelled by electric trams, by which you enter the City of

EATON "RED LION."

Norwich. It is a noble road, bordered by young avenues and lined with private residences, but still suburban, and out of key with old road romance. Along it we come to the junction of roads opposite the fine Norfolk and Norwich Hospital, where the road from London, through Colchester and Ipswich, falls in, and both go forward together down St. Stephen's Street into the City.

XLVII

DISTINGUISHED travellers of old generally made their entrance here, through the long-vanished St. Stephen's Gate in the equally vanished walls. This way came, in 1600, on his public entry, that dancing Will Kemp, of whom we have already heard much. On the completion of his ninth day's jigging, from Hingham to Barford Bridge and Norwich, he ended at St. Giles's Gate, and thence, to avoid the crowd, rode into the City. Three days later, having duly advertised his intentions, he danced in through St. Stephen's Gate. The City Waits assembled to do him honour, huge crowds pressed forward to see him, the Mayor entertained this caperer and gave him £5 in Elizabethan angels, and altogether he had a truly phenomenal reception.

The delightful old City of Norwich was ever hearty and hospitable, and, although much else be changed, it is so still. No merely ecclesiastic settlement, the cold glories of its Cathedral are but one phase of Norwich. Prosperous and self-sufficing in the best sense; its citizens public-spirited, its situation beautiful, its highways imposing and byways quaint and curious, Norwich stands by itself, in its likeness to no other town or city in England. If one must seek a parallel, it is to Exeter one must look, for there is much in common between the two. Both are, very distinctly, the capitals of their respective

provinces; Norwich still metropolitan to East Anglia, and Exeter to the West of England. In both, too, the streets are winding and without plan, affording facilities, unparalleled elsewhere, of immediately losing your way.

Unhappily—it is purely an antiquarian criticism—the prosperity and business energy of Norwich have swept away many landmarks of absorbing interest to the student of the roads, and much havoc has been wrought with the old coaching inns. While many of the more obscure old taverns remain, the great coaching houses, standing on prominent sites and occupying much valuable ground, have, for the most part, been destroyed. Only "Rampant Horse Street" now remains to tell of the inn once bearing that name. The "Maid's Head," a splendid specimen of an old hostelry, remains, it is true, in Tombland, but where is the "King's Head," to which the Newmarket, Thetford, and Norwich Mail once came, and where the "Coach Office, Lobster Lane," whence the Cromer Coach, the "Unicorn," by North Walsham, set out twice a day? What the "Unicorn" was like we may see from Pollard's picture. It was something between an omnibus and a hearse, and was drawn by a "unicorn" team—*i.e.*, three horses; whence the name of the coach.

St. Peter's, the narrow thoroughfare adjoining Rampant Horse Street, behind the Market Place, and overshadowed by the great bulk of St. Peter Mancroft, was a great rendezvous for the coaching

THE "UNICORN," NORWICH AND CROMER COACH. *From a print after J. Pollard, 1820.*

and carrying interests, and signs of that old-time feature in its history still remain in the numerous inns and houses that once were inns, now converted to other uses. Of these the most important by far was the "White Swan," sometimes called, for convenience, merely the "Swan." Many years have passed since it retired from public life, and it is now occupied as a wholesale provision store, for which the spacious old coach-yard and its great ranges of buildings seem to render it peculiarly suitable. Many might pass the house unnoticed, for its red-brick front is severely plain. The old coach-archway, however, is sufficient to attract the attention of the observant, for although the fine late seventeenth-century decorative carvings of festooned fruit and flowers on its framing are blunted by time and many successive coats of paint, their excellence still proclaims itself to the critical eye. A cursory glance shows that the house was re-fronted with brick in the Georgian period, and that beneath that commonplace skin an ancient building, in parts dating back to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, still exists. A little fragment peeps interestingly from one corner of the red brick; it is an ancient corner-post, ornamented with the carving of an armed man. Not even those Georgian builders had the heart to destroy it.

Among coaches frequenting the "White Swan" were the "Light Post Coach," the "Expedition," and its successor, the "Magnet," referred to in the earlier pages of this book. But long before

any coaches ran the "White Swan" was an important house; the foremost in Norwich. Traces of that ancient import are not far to seek, and are stimulating to the imagination, even if facts be wanting. Directly opposite the entrance, across the very narrow street, is the great church

ST. PETER MANCROFT, AND YARD OF THE "WHITE SWAN."

of St. Peter Mancroft, and in line with it are the ancient Gothic vaulted cellars of the old inn. Antiquaries, on their periodical visits to Norwich, descend these depths, and, standing amid the butter-tubs and the sacks of nuts and miscellaneous groceries, speculate darkly on possible secret communications between the mediæval inn

and the church, with little enlightenment ever forthcoming.

A ramble over the premises discloses nothing more of really ancient date, but does reveal something unexpected, in the splendid long room on the first floor of the buildings stretching down the yard. It dates from about 1760, and is, architecturally speaking, a noble room, of moulded ceiling and panelled plaster walls, with a raised platform at one end, surmounted by a Chippendale shield with coat-of-arms greatly resembling that of Caius College. It is now degraded to the position of a stock-room, piled with hams, sacks, and biscuit-boxes, but keeps its distinction throughout adversity, and is a reminder of times when the "White Swan" was the centre of Norwich social life; when balls and assemblies were held beneath its roof, and the original "Theatre Royal," nursery of much dramatic talent, was established here. At the "White Swan" those pioneer players, the "Norwich Company of Comedians, servants to his Grace the Duke of Norfolk," as they humbly styled themselves, began their performance. At that time the play began at 7 p.m., but the doors were opened at 5. An hour earlier than that, the servants of the playgoers were sent to keep the seats, which were not highly expensive. The highest price was half a crown for a box; and the pit, then fashionable, cost only two shillings. When such prices ruled, the actor's lot was not exactly luxurious, and stage-furnishing was quite

a negligible quantity. But dramatic art was never higher than then.

XLVIII

It has been already remarked how winding are the ways of Norwich, and it is indeed only with difficulty those once in it can find their way out. If it were required to turn a very pretty compliment to Norwich, here we have the most obvious foundation for one. But we must on to the coast, and take the City only incidentally, as its mazy streets are threaded on the way to the Aylsham road. It is by no means slighting Norwich so to do, for the City has been described in a short impressionistic sketch at the close of that companion volume to this, the "Norwich Road."

From St. Peter's, across St. Giles' Street, by the back of the Guildhall, to Charing Cross is the most interesting way. This Charing Cross does not in the least resemble the place of the same name in London, and obtains its title from quite a different source. No "*chère reine*" gave this name, which is a corruption of "Sherers' Cross," a wayside cross so styled from the sheermen or cloth-cutters who once inhabited this quarter. It was demolished in 1732.

Here, fronting on the narrow street, is the so-called "Strangers' Hall," one of the most

deeply interesting places in Norwich; what, in fact, is nothing less than a well-preserved specimen of a mediæval merchant's house. We do not, in this England of ours, lack churches and cathedrals, palaces, castles, and mansions of the great, to show us how we worshipped, and how kings and nobles housed, in days of old; but we are very sadly lacking in remains of the houses built for, and occupied by, the wealthy traders of anything from five to two centuries ago. We know comparatively little of the way in which the Mayors of our great towns lived, and thus the accidental preservation of this house, built by a mayor of Norwich, and inhabited by and added to by a long succession of such worthies, is particularly instructive. The oldest portion is the crypt, used anciently as cellarage and store-room, built probably by Roger Herdegrey, who was a Member of Parliament in 1358, and Bailiff of Norwich two years later. After passing through many hands, the property came, about 1490, to Thomas Cawse, mercer, twice Mayor, and twice the chosen representative of the City in the Council of the State. From him it came to Nicholas Sotherton, mercer, who seems to have rebuilt the greater portion. In 1610 his family sold it. Already the house had acquired the name of the "Strangers' Hall," for Sotherton, under the patronage of the Duke of Norfolk, had warmly welcomed the Flemings, refugees from Holland under the Spanish domination, and had given

those strangers the use of his house. Although they did not reside here, and probably did not

GATEWAY, STRANGERS' HALL.

use it for any great length of time as the central meeting-place of their community, it

has, singularly enough, retained the name under many changes. Francis Cock, grocer, and Mayor in 1627, resided here, and built the great staircase in the Hall, together with the large oak-framed oriel window; and another Mayor, Sir Joseph Paine, followed him, and made alterations for his own comfort and dignity in

THE STRANGERS' HALL.

1659. He was the last of that long line, and when he died, in 1668, the history of the old place becomes obscure. Early in the nineteenth century, however, we obtain a glimpse of it as the Judges' Lodgings, but thenceforward the old relic fell upon neglect, and would have been recklessly destroyed for rebuilding had not an enthusiastic and public-spirited citizen

purchased it in 1899. It still bears the misleading name of the "Strangers' Hall," and no one sufficiently impresses the visitors who pay their sixpence a head for being shown over it that the building is a rare and splendid specimen of the domestic surroundings of the wealthy and cultured traders who made Norwich prosperous in old days.

Sotherton lies, with many another worthy citizen, in St. John's church, Maddermarket, or other one of the many churches—"steeple-houses" the Quakers would call them—set so thickly about Norwich. Where Gibson lies, who in those old days set up the neighbouring water-fountain, I know not; but surely his spirit must be unquiet since the ornamental portion of it has been built into the wall of Bullard's brewery, and the water of which he was so proud cut off. No longer can one drink here, but Gibson's very excusable little crow over his work may yet be read:—

This water here cavght
In sorte as yowe see
From a spring is brovghte,
Thereskore foot and three

Gibson hath it sovghte
From Saynt Lawrens wel
And his charg this wrowghte
Who now here doe dwel

Thy ease was his coste not smal
Vouchsafid wel of those
Which thankful be his worke to see
And there can be no foes.

Near by, on our way to Cromer, is a building notable above all others in the varied culture of the good City of Norwich. This is St. Andrew's Hall, where the triennial Norfolk and Norwich Musical Festivals are held. The long, flint-built structure, of late Gothic design, wears a strikingly ecclesiastical appearance, as it has every right to do, for it really *is* a church, and was built by the Dominicans, or Black Friars, as the church of their monastery. The City certainly acquired it at a bargain-price when that establishment was dissolved, under Henry VIII., but extraordinary bargains of a precisely similar nature were on offer throughout the kingdom at that time, and prices ruled so low that in retired situations, where the huge abbeys and priory buildings were far away from any possible civic use, they were given to the nearest local magnate, to do with as he would. King Henry took £80 for this particular example, and Norwich certainly had full value for its money.

The building then was made to serve the purpose of the City Grammar School, and so continued for twelve years, until Edward VI., in 1548, granted the ancient Charnel House Chapel—then usually called the Carnary—in the Cathedral Close, for the School. A striking change then came over the Dominicans' old church, for the citizens, who had found the Guildhall too cramped, put this fine roomy building, under the name of the New Hall, to use

as an assize-court, an exchange, a place of assembly, a hall for City feasts, or as anything that the public needs of the moment dictated. On Sundays the large alien Dutch population were permitted the use of the nave for their services, and the Flemish refugees had the choir. Perhaps the grandest of all the sumptuous feasts and receptions given here was that at which Charles II. and his Court were entertained, in

CARICATURE IN STONE, ST. ANDREW'S HALL.

1671. It was on this occasion that he knighted Sir Thomas Browne.

The eastern part of the building, anciently the choir, is still divided from the nave, and is known as Blackfriars Hall. It is in the nave, or "St. Andrew's Hall," that the Musical Festivals have long been held. Portraits of Norfolk and Norwich worthies, pictures of historical events, and naval trophies decorate the walls.

The good folk of Norwich are rightly proud

of their noble Hall, and the ways of its custodians have always been keenly followed. Its restoration and re-arrangement in 1863 were the cause of a good deal of local searchings of heart and contention, and a survival of that war of parties may still be seen in the grotesque carvings that form stops to the hood-mould of a door on the south side of the Hall. They are carved in the true mediæval style, one representing a pig

CARICATURE IN STONE, ST. ANDREW'S HALL.

blowing a horn; the other showing a pig with a very self-satisfied expression of countenance playing an organ, while a number of grinning demons blow the bellows. These were the satirical efforts of the victorious party who thus sealed their victory; the point of these satires in stone being that the head of the defeated faction was a Mr. Bacon—Richard Noverre Bacon, editor and proprietor of the *Norwich Mercury*, born 1798, died 1884.

XLIX

By Prince's Street we come to Tombland, the open space by the Cathedral, where St. George's Church and Tombland Alley make so picturesque a group; and thence across the Wensum at Fye

TOMBLAND ALLEY.

Bridge and along Magdalen Street. Bearing to the left, by Botolph Street, and noticing the gable end of the "King's Arms" inn, with its ornamental tie-rods "I.C. 1646," on the gable-end, we finally pass along St. Augustine Street, to come to the

long suburban rise of the Aylsham Road, through Upper Hellesdon.

Here, just beyond the "One Mile" inn, is an ancient cross, recently restored, looking like a survival of some historic event, but a near glance reveals that it only marks the boundary of the City in this direction.

Horsham St. Faith's village—generally called in these parts merely "St. Faith's," or "St. Fay" —is just over the hill-top, and is the usual small Norfolk village with a large church. It stands aloof from the centre of the place, up a by-lane, and opposite a row of six old seventeenth-century red-brick cottages, known as "Church Row," all very rural. A last touch in that sort is the sight of a bird's nest built into the delicately undercut stonework of the upper part of a tabernacle on the south parvise.

A general air of dilapidation and put-off-all-the-repairs-to-next-year kind of aspect belongs to the central spot of this village—the hub of St. Fay's. A very large, very rush-overgrown, and excessively duckweedy pond occupies the best part of the road, slyly lying in wait to receive into its green and rank bosom the village tippler or the incautious midnight roysterer from Norwich; nay, even the unwary cyclist.

This out-at-elbows air reflects ill upon the condition of the horsehair weaving, still the staple trade of the village. It is "not what it was," say the natives, and although some thirty to forty weavers are still employed, the trade is a

decaying one. Historically, St. Faith's is interesting, for it is bound up with the story of Katharine Howard, who was daughter of Lord Edmund Howard, niece of the Duke of Norfolk, and fifth wife of that professional widower, Henry VIII., who wrought so greatly in all manner of affairs of Church and State during his thirty-eight years' reign that we meet him at almost every turn.

It seems that while still a child, not yet thirteen years of age, in the house of her father's step-mother, the Duchess of Norfolk, at St. Faith's, she was debauched by one Henry Manox, perhaps a music-master, described as "a scoundrelly player on the virginals," and that she had relations of a more than questionable nature with one Francis Derham. Loud as are the moralists in denouncing the levity of our own times, we have but to read the intimate accounts of the household in whose vile society this forward girl was brought up, to be convinced that we have advanced since then. The fury of Henry knew no bounds when these disclosures were made, eighteen months after his wedding with her, and she paid the penalty with her life, in the Tower, in the twentieth year of her age.

Of Newton St. Faith, scarce more than a mile down the road, there is little to be said, but its few houses are succeeded by the loveliest two miles of highway in Norfolk. Enclosed fields, trim with their neat hedges and long lines of wheat and barley, or well-ordered in their infinite perspectives of winter furrows, give place suddenly

"ST. FAY'S."

to a land rich in the varied tints of bracken and heather, and wooded, now in dense clumps, or again in isolated trees. These are the fairy-like woods of Stratton Strawless. The peculiar beauty of these ferny glades is chiefly due to the large numbers of silver birch—that airy and graceful "lady of the forest"—intermingled with the dark pines, the grey beeches, and the sturdy oaks that all go to make up the ranks of the Stratton woods, whose picturesque *abandon* is greatly added to by their being open to the road. For this is common land, and before Robert Marsham planted it in 1797, was a stretch of heath, barren of aught save heather and bracken. It is, in fact, in the existence of this ancient heath that Blomefield, the historian of Norfolk, rightly or wrongly, found the origin of the "Strawless" in the place-name, for he points out that no corn could have been grown here. His finding is probably wrong, for Mr. Walter Rye, eminent in Norfolk archæology, has found it was "Stratton Streles" in the time of Henry III., and that the name almost certainly is Danish, deriving from the village of Stroeden Strelev in Denmark.

We need not hasten to acclaim the Marsham who created these woods as a public benefactor, because he did not aim at anything of the kind, and merely wished to improve the outlook from his hideous house, now confronted with these glades, instead of by a monotonous flat. There is no denying the ugliness of that square brick mansion. A benefactor would have hidden it

from the public gaze, but it is, instead, rather ostentatiously on view from the road, across a wide, uninterrupted stretch of grassy meadow. The lodges are far more endurable than the mansion, and although built in the same dull brick, in a manner fondly thought classic, the brilliant coat of whitewash given them makes their clumsiness almost picturesque.

STRATTON STRAWLESS LODGES.

The village lies nearly a mile away from the road, past the reedy lakes that follow the course of a little stream. In the church may yet be seen the monuments of Marshams, from 1250 onwards; together with a window filled with probably the very worst stained glass on earth.

With regret we leave these lovely woods for the cultivated and more prosaic lands towards Hevingham, whose great church, overlooking the

road from its knoll, is a mile distant from the village. It is a church with lofty nave, but no aisles, and, restored with more thoroughness than discretion, has been swept clean of any possible interest. But its noble south porch, and the gigantic sweet-chestnut tree in the churchyard, give the spot an air of distinction.

Hevingham, with the three succeeding places, is celebrated (or rather, made notorious) by a rhyme whose inner meaning no local antiquary has yet followed. Thus it runs:—

> Blickling flats, Aylsham fliers,
> Marsham peewits, and Hevingham liars.

Marsham, a mile distant, lies at the foot of a hill. It is a scattered village, its Dutch-gabled "White Hart" and the sign of the "Plough and Shuttle" pointing to some bygone foregathering of local agricultural and weaving interests; but the church is its principal feature. Not imposing without, its interior is particularly beautiful, with clerestoried nave, fine open-timbered roof, and splendid rood-screen. A feature that piques the curiosity of enquiring minds, with no possibility of that curiosity being satisfied, is the very ancient slab on the floor, outside the chancel, with the word "oblivio" repeated eight times, and a Latin inscription to the effect that the person buried here was of opinion that he would be forgotten as soon as his heart ceased to beat. It would appear as though he wished this oblivion, for the stone is without name or date.

Marsham was the incumbency of the Reverend Samuel Oates, father of the famous, or infamous, Titus Oates, who figures so pitifully in the reign of Charles II., and is described, with much justice, in biographical dictionaries as "Perjurer." But Marsham escapes the odium of being his birthplace, for he was born at Oakham, in Rutlandshire.

From Marsham an avenue of young oaks—young as oaks go, for they are only some sixty years old, and mere infants—leads on to Aylsham, passing, on the right hand, an old toll-house, and crossing the railway on the level at Aylsham station.

Aylsham once manufactured linen and worsted, and the "lineners" and worsted-weavers contributed greatly to the building of its fine church, a church packed away inconspicuously in a corner off the Market Square; but those old trades are dead now, and only the weekly market keeps the little town alive. You enter the place along a street once called "the straits," and still remarkably narrow, past the old coaching inn, the "Dog"; but the little town does not fully disclose itself along this narrow way, for its central point and focus is the Market Square, reached on the left by a short and narrow street. Here stands that curious old early seventeenth-century brick inn, the "Black Boys," remarkable for its coved eaves, still bearing the old decorative design that gave the house its name. This is a device of foliage and fruit, painted and gilt, running the two sides of the house, with three little black,

impish-looking figures in the centre of the side facing the square and one at each corner, all blowing gilded horns. They look like the "little demons" of Ingoldsby's "Truants," who had "broken loose from the National School below," but they are really only intended for representations of Bacchus, and thus by a side-wind, as it were, to hint to travellers of old of the good cheer of the house.

L

THE "Black Boys" owes its existence on this scale to the near neighbourhood of Blickling Hall, perhaps the most famous mansion in Norfolk, and certainly the most beautiful and stately. Blickling is scarce a mile distant, and is so small a village that it must have been to Aylsham in general, and to the "Black Boys" in particular, the custom fell in those old days when the Hobarts of Blickling Hall entertained so royally. We cannot forbear visiting Blickling, for not merely Hobarts, but Anne Boleyn herself, most unhappy of queens, is associated with that noble pile and has made it historic.

The first sight of Blickling Hall is one of the greatest surprises that can possibly befall the traveller in search of the picturesque. Every one, in these days of broadcast photographs, is in some sort familiar with the look of the Hall,

and most people can tell you it looks like another, and a better, Hatfield House; but no one is prepared on coming downhill past the church into the village, to find the main front of this finest of Jacobean mansions, this dream of architectural beauty, actually looking upon the road, unobstructedly, from behind its velvet lawns. No theatrical manager, no scene-painter, cunning in all the artful accessories of the stage, could devise anything more dramatic, and you—Columbus of the roads, who steer into unwonted byways in search of the beautiful—cannot repress the involuntary tribute of an admiratory O! at sight of it. There it stands, like some proud conscious beauty, isolated. No meaner building shoulders it, and for all the stir you see or sound you hear, it might be some enchanted palace, not waked to life and love. It has, indeed, its modern tragedy, for its owner, the young Marquis of Lothian, is afflicted, and non-resident.

There is something of a village, a little way removed; but only a few houses, themselves picturesque, are to be found, together with an inn, the "Buckinghamshire Arms," displaying the heraldic achievement of the Earls of Buckinghamshire and their motto, *Auctor pretiosa fecit* ("The giver makes them valuable"), one of those delightfully bumptious and self-sufficient phrases abounding in titled families.

Blickling is generally associated with the unhappy Anne Boleyn, but her birthplace is quite uncertain, and although her early years were

BLICKLING HALL.

passed at this place, it was not Blickling Hall, but the long-vanished Dagworth Manor, with which she was familiar. The present stately building was not commenced until 1619, eighty-three years after her death. Dagworth Manor stood nearly a mile distant from the present Hall, and was built towards the close of the fourteenth century by Sir Nicholas Dagworth, who was succeeded by that Sir Thomas de Erpingham who built the Erpingham Gate in the Cathedral Close at Norwich, together with the tower and the greater part of Erpingham church, and was that stout old warrior who in his old age fought at Agincourt, as we read in Shakespeare's *Henry V.*, where the King says:—

> Good morrow, old Sir Thomas Erpingham:
> A good soft pillow for that good white head
> Were better than a churlish turf of France.

It was that brave old knight who led the onslaught with the war-cry to his men, "Nestroke" ("Now strike!").

Erpingham was followed by Sir John Fastolfe, who sold the property about 1459 to Sir Geoffrey Boleyn, mercer and Lord Mayor of London, who was son of Geoffrey Boleyn of Salle. The Boleyns are thought to have derived their name from one of their family who traded to Boulogne. Sir Geoffrey was great-grandfather of Anne Boleyn, who became Queen to Henry VIII. and mother of Queen Elizabeth. Sir James Boleyn, uncle to Anne, lived at Dagworth in reduced circumstances, and

finally sold the estate to Sir John Clere, of Ormesby, whose spendthrift son alienated it to Sir Henry Hobart, Lord Chief Justice, and grandson of Henry VII.'s Attorney-General. It was this Sir Henry who began to build Blickling Hall, in 1619. His son completed it in 1628. The Hobarts in time became ennobled as Earls of Buckinghamshire, and finally the property came by marriage to the Kerrs, Marquises of Lothian.

The striking general resemblance of Blickling Hall to Hatfield House is accounted for by the belief that the same architectural draughtsman designed both. Its interior is worthy of the lovely outward view, and is still rich in magnificent old furniture, in the famous Blickling library, and in relics of unhappy Anne Boleyn. It is curious to observe how the Hobarts, who had no family connection with the Boleyns, and did not even purchase the estate from them, preserved the memory of their sometime ownership, in the sculptured figures of rampant bulls that flank the main entrance and make punning allusion to Boleyn.

The church of Blickling was restored in 1874, after the death of the eighth Marquis of Lothian, to whose memory a most ornate altar-tomb, with marble recumbent portrait effigy and marble angels at head and foot, has been erected. The guide-books tell with reverence how it cost £5,000, and how it was sculptured by G. F. Watts, R.A.; but we need not necessarily be impressed, save, indeed, by such senseless squandering of money and by

the appalling marmoreal solidity of those angels, who do by no means aid and abet the imagination in its conception of angels as ethereal beings. In short, if we resolutely refuse to be snobbishly affected by the cost of this monument and by the Royal Academical initials of its sculptor, we shall have no difficulty in perceiving it to be a gross failure. The last grotesque touch is in the selection of a marble streaked with brown veins. One such streak discolours one side of the effigy's face, and gives it the dreadful appearance of one suffering from a loathsome skin disease.

Within this church are many pretty and fanciful epitaphs. Here you may read the verses on various members of the Hargraves, citizens of London and members of the Companies of Joiners and "Shoomakers," and those of their children, untimely dead. "Sleep, sweetly sleep," says one:

> Sleep, sweetly sleep, slumber this night away,
> The world at last shall burn, and then it will be day;

and by the light of that conflagration the youthful Hargrave is doubtless expected to rise, Phœnix-like, and soar into the realms of eternal bliss!

Consalus Hargrave died in his second year, 1626:—

> Had he lived to be a man,
> This inch had growne but to a span.
> Nowe he is past all feare and paine
> 'Twere sin to wish him here againe.
> Veiwe but the way by which we come,
> Thou'lt say his is best that's first at home.

Here, too, are some Boleyn memorials, among them a brass to an Anna Boleyn, who died in childhood in 1476. She was aunt to the historical Anne.

A very striking feature in this church is the altar-tomb of the Cleres, whose armorial bearings, with those of the distinguished families with whom they claimed to be allied, are gorgeously repeated very many times around the four sides of the monument. It is a work of the Jacobean period, and retrospectively includes the old coats of alliances as far back as the eleventh century. Modern research proves most of these claims to be deliberately false.

Among the many Hobarts who lie in the vaults beneath Blickling church is one who met with a very tragical end. This is that Sir Henry Hobart, Bart., who was knighted by Charles II. in 1671, on that monarch's progress through Norfolk, after having been entertained with princely magnificence at Blickling Hall. Sir Henry was no thick-and-thin supporter of the Stuarts, for he fought for King William against James II. at the Battle of the Boyne, and when Dutch William's rule was established, settled down here at his Norfolk home, where he might have lived to a green old age, had it not been for his overbearing temper. It was in 1698, in a dispute over an election in which he had borne a losing part, that Sir Henry Hobart's career was cut short. He resented some expressions of opinion used by a neighbouring

gentleman, Mr. Oliver le Neve, and challenged him to a duel. Hobart had the reputation of being one of the most accomplished swordsmen of his day, and doubtless expected to do Le Neve's business at that spot on Cawston Heath where the meeting was arranged to take place. Le Neve was notoriously a bad swordsman, and

"WOODROW INN" AND THE HOBART MONUMENT.

probably made his will and went forth to that encounter never hoping to return; but the conflict had an unexpected result. Hobart drew first blood, running his sword through his adversary's arm, but immediately afterwards fell, mortally wounded, with a thrust in the stomach, of which he died the next day, Sunday, August 21st, 1698. He fell not so much from

any unwonted skill on Le Neve's part as from the circumstance that Le Neve was a left-handed man and his sword-play difficult to follow. Le Neve had to fly the country for a time; not in fear of the law, which then countenanced the duello, but from the threatened vengeance of the powerful Hobart clan. The spot where the duel was fought is some four miles from Blickling. Cawston Heath has long been enclosed and brought under cultivation, but the place is marked by a rude stone pillar surmounted by an urn and simply inscribed with the letters "H.H." This monument stands within a dense strip of plantation beside the Norwich and Holt road, close to where it is crossed by the road between Aylsham and Cawston. Adjoining the place is an old coaching hostelry—the "Woodrow" inn—with a curious gallows sign spanning the highway.

LI

From Aylsham to Cromer is little more than ten miles; downhill from Aylsham town to the levels at Ingworth, whose name, meaning the "meadow village," illustrates that it is, in fact, set down beside the water-meads bordering the river Bure. Ingworth has a dilapidated church picturesquely overlooking the road from a little hillock, with only the lower part of its round tower left.

Erpingham church is presently seen, away to the left, standing lonely in the ploughlands, without any village, and on the right hand an avenue leads to Lord Suffield's place, Gunton Park. Hanworth is out of sight, but the toll-house at Hanworth Corner, now converted into a post-office, argues its near neighbourhood. To this succeeds Roughton, where a pond, a scrubby

INGWORTH.

piece of common, another round-towered church, and a comfortable homely inn comprise the salient features of the place.

The last miles into Cromer from Roughton wear a wind-swept appearance. The hedgerow trees that have hitherto stood boldly erect now begin to cower and grow in contorted shapes, all with one general inclination away from the prevalent easterly gales of winter and bitter

spring. The physical aspect of the country also changes. From the long levels and the gentle undulations we come to the exposed table-land of Roughton Common, the gorse and bracken-grown land around Crossdale Street, and the gravelly tumbled ups and downs of Felbrigg. We seem to have exchanged the suavities of Norfolk for the bold and picturesque ruggedness of the Scottish littoral.

Felbrigg, whose name seems to have been brought from Denmark by the early piratical settlers from that country, in fond remembrance of their own Felborg, lies on a slip road into Cromer, beside the main highway, and is worth notice, not merely on account of this heathy picturesqueness, like that of a sublimated Hampstead Heath, innocent of houses, Cockneys, and County Council notice-boards, but by reason of its ancient Hall and the Windhams who for centuries owned the property. The Windhams came originally from Wymondham in the fifteenth century, and at first spelled their name in precisely the same way as that of the town. They replaced the ancient knightly family of De Felbrigge, whose stately monuments in brass still remain on the pavements of the church. There is the brass to Simon de Felbrigge, 1351, and the particularly fine one to a Sir Simon, who died in 1443, and is represented here as a Knight of the Garter and Standard-Bearer to Richard II. The ancient home of the Felbrigges was rebuilt by Windhams in a mixed Jacobean and Dutch

style, and is a stately residence deeply bowered in a densely wooded Park. The pierced parapet inscription, "Gloria Deo in Excelsis," seen against the sky, is earnest of the piety of the Windhams of that time.

The Windhams—the real Windhams, for the later ones were merely Lukins, who assumed the name on inheriting the property—ended with William Windham, the statesman, who, having played an enlightened and patriotic part as Secretary for War under Pitt from 1794 to 1801, and as Secretary for War and the Colonies in Lord Grenville's Administration of 1806, died in 1810. With him ended the high reputation of that family, and although romance of a kind speedily made the name better known all over England than ever it had been before, it was a romance that conferred notoriety rather than fame.

Felbrigg does not merely *look* romantic: every circumstance of latter-day romance attaches to that noble Hall, those green o'er-arching glades. It is true that the story is of an ignoble and sordid type, but what it lacks in sweetness and good savour it fully makes up for in the matter of human interest. It is the way of latter-day romance to be unsavoury, and the story of Felbrigg Hall and "Mad Windham," the talk of England in the early sixties, and still vividly recollected in Norfolk, reeked with foulness beyond the common run of public washings of dirty linen.

It was a tale of family degeneracy, in which the honoured name of Windham should, strictly speaking, have had no part. When the famous statesman died, the historic property went to his nephew, William Howe Lukin, who assumed the name of Windham, and married Lady Sophia Hervey, sister of the Marquis of Bristol. In November, 1854, the self-styled William Howe "Windham" died, leaving a widow and an only

FELBRIGG HALL.

son, William Frederick, at that time fourteen years of age, and already, at Eton and elsewhere, an ill-disposed and uncontrollable buffoon and vicious idiot. Among the guardians of this promising heir to the name and lands of the Windhams were his mother and his uncle, General Windham, whose actions and motives were so severely and unjustly criticised by the Radical press and the lower orders in course of the notorious "Windham Trial."

William Frederick Windham would, in the ordinary course, have come of age and succeeded to his inheritance, without question, in 1861; but his conduct as a boy and as a growing man was so extraordinary and outrageous that it was reluctantly decided by General Windham and others to petition for a judicial inquiry into the state of mind of this heir, who, they claimed—and after-events fully supported that claim—could not be safely entrusted with the management of his own affairs.

The Commission "*de Lunatico Inquirendo*," popularly known as the "Windham Trial," granted to the petitioners, began on December 16th, 1861, and lasted thirty-four days. Extraordinary interest was taken in the proceedings, and even now the pamphlets printed and sold by thousands, containing the dreadful evidence taken in those thirty-four days, may be occasionally met with in the cottage homes of Norfolk.

According to the opening statement, the alleged lunatic would, on coming of age, have been entitled to Felbrigg Hall and rents of £3,100 per annum, subject to the deductions of an annuity of £1,500 for his mother and £350 for upkeep of property. In all, he would have enjoyed an income of about £1,300, to be increased by 1869 to between £4,000 and £5,000, on succession to the neighbouring Hanworth estates. The object of the petitioners seeking to have their ward adjudged incapable of managing his own affairs was not to deprive him of liberty, but merely to

procure legal sanction of their proposal for themselves to be made guardians of the property during his lifetime, in the interests of the lunatic himself, who was not, and had never been, according to their contention, a sane and reasoning human being. To support that contention, they made, by the opening statement of counsel, and in the evidence of troops of witnesses, a long series of allegations, showing that he had exhibited simple imbecility in early childhood, and that with his physical growth his mental powers had continually decayed. The cold, dispassionate opening speech of counsel for the petitioners, recounting Windham's idiotcies, still, even though the actors in that drama are now all dead, makes the reader shiver at its businesslike unfolding of a nature scarce removed from that of a beast. Sent to Eton, he was a buffoon there, and commonly known as "Mad Windham." His indescribable habits led to his being early removed and placed under the care of a long succession of tutors, none of whom could make anything of him, and threw up the impossible task, or were relieved of it, one after another. Many testified in court that he was incapable of reasoning, addicted to low associates, filthy and profane language, and wanton and capricious cruelty to animals. He would gorge his food, feeding without the aid of knife and fork, and, eating until he was sick, would begin again, like a dog. This extraordinary conduct was not caused by drink, for, among all his failings, drunkenness was not one. His violent

and capricious temper had led to extraordinary scenes. At an evening party he had rushed at a gentleman whom he had never before seen and to whom he had not spoken a word, and, shrieking like a wild Indian, had pinned him to the wall by his whiskers. He was exceptionally and consistently rude and offensive to ladies, and delighted to tear their clothes and make grimaces at them. He could not follow out any train of thought, and acted from one minute to another without reference to previous actions, becoming the laughing-stock of servants. He would throw money away in the streets, and laugh when saner people scrambled for it; would fondle a horse one moment and thrash it unmercifully the next. These actions, said counsel, could not be those of a person enjoying reasonable use of his faculties, but there was worse to come. It was only with reluctance General Windham was obliged to bring these painful affairs of his unhappy nephew into the light of publicity; but there was no other course, for his vile associates had persuaded him that all the efforts being made to prevent his moral, physical, and financial ruin were only part of a scheme by his uncle to deprive him of his liberty and property. That it was not so might be at once explained by the statement that, as a matter of fact, whichever way the inquiry resulted, or whatever happened to his nephew, in no case would General Windham be the heir.

Witnesses were then called who bore out the

opening statement, and added a great deal more. Some told how Windham would at times pretend to be a fireman, and, dressing in character, go about in a devastating manner with an axe and chop down doors and smash windows. At other times the fancy took him to act the part of a railway guard. With uniform made for the character, he would frequent railway platforms, blow a whistle, and wave a flag. Once, performing these pranks, he nearly caused a railway disaster. At other times he would make off with passengers' luggage. Altogether, it will be conceded, from the public, as well as from the family, point of view, he should have been put under restraint.

But the real compelling cause of the action was the connection he had recently formed with a woman whom he had picked up in London, during Ascot week. Agnes Willoughby, *alias* Rogers, in the words of counsel, "was not the chastest of the chaste; her favours in love-affairs were not few; she was known to the police." On August 30th, 1861, having come of age on the 9th, he married her and settled £800 a year on her, to be increased in 1869 to £1,500. She had been, up to that time, living with a man named Roberts, and after the marriage the three lived together.

The action was defended by Windham and his associates, who, in the event of his being declared a lunatic, would have lost the rich harvest of plunder they were reaping. A pitiful feature of the case, and one tending to prejudice the public against the petitioners, was that Windham's

mother, naturally unwilling to see her son branded as a madman, gave evidence for him.

"What," asked Pilate, "what is truth?" Of the more than 150 witnesses called during the progress of the case, a number declared they had never noticed any peculiarity about Windham, save "perhaps he was exceedingly high-spirited. He always behaved like a gentleman." Yet his career forbids us to believe anything of the kind.

It did not take the special jury of twenty-four "good men and true" very long to deliberate upon the concluding speeches of counsel. In half an hour they returned, with the astonishing verdict, "That Mr. Windham is of sound mind and capable of taking care of himself and his affairs." This announcement was received with cheers.

Both the verdict and its public reception reflect the feeling of the time on questions of lunacy. The terrible scandals and revelations of sane persons having in the past been "put away" by relatives for sake of gain were fresh in the public mind, and no conceivable evidence short of that of homicidal mania would have sufficed for a jury at that period. Windham was left to his own devices. The costs of the action, coming out of his estate, amounted to £20,000, and with the extravagance and robbery that went on, unchecked, around him, speedily embarrassed the unhappy creature. The vile parasites of the woman he had married had sole control. They even appeared at Felbrigg, and gave orders for

the valuable timber to be cut down and sold. His wife, who had never made a secret of the fact that she loathed him, went off with some one else; but Windham, who in a lucid moment had brought divorce proceedings against her, condoned the offence, and she returned for just as long as there was any plunder to be obtained from the wreck of his fortunes. Later, she was living with a man named Jack Abel, who then kept a public-house, the "Lord Camden" (still standing) in Charing Cross, Norwich. Abel was an unscrupulous, but successful horse-dealer, who had, in earlier years, been in league with a gang of smugglers trading between Wells and Thetford, and supplied the horses carrying their illicit merchandise.

Meanwhile, Windham was throwing away money and property with both hands. A passing mania for coaching led him to set up a Norwich and Cromer coach, which became the terror of the countryside. To travel in or on "Mad Windham's" coach, or to be on the road when it came past, was equally hazardous, and a respected Norfolk cleric still recalls his solitary encounter with the maniac in a cloud of dust, with four rearing horses, and a stentorian voice, yelling, "Out of the way, d——n your eyes!"

There was every element of uncertainty about "Mad Windham's" coach. It was uncertain as to whether he would not suddenly decide to go to Yarmouth instead, and equally uncertain whether, wherever it was, you would get there safely; but, once there, certitude of a sort was reached, in your

unalterable determination not to return by him, and, if needs were, to *walk* back.

The story of his financial expedients is a long one, but it ended in July, 1864, with final and irrevocable bankruptcy. He had completely dissipated the residue of his extensive property, and was dependent upon an allowance made by his uncle, whose efforts to save him from himself had met with such misrepresentation. To keep him employed and out of mischief, he was induced to accept a situation at £1 a week, to drive the "Express," Norwich and Cromer coach; and when that enterprise failed—chiefly, we may suppose, because *he* drove it, and because of an absurd prejudice the passengers cherished against acquiring broken necks—it was kept on the road solely for the same purpose; until, indeed, he fell in love for the hundredth time. On this occasion it was a Norwich barmaid who had caught his fancy. She thought coaching "low," and he gave it up, to please her.

The poor fool was drawing to his end. A few weeks longer of a miserable existence at the "Norfolk Hotel," where he had one solitary room, and it was all over. He died there, after a few hours' illness, February 2nd, 1866. A clot of blood on the lung cut his career short, in his twenty-sixth year. His body was removed to Cromer, and thence to the family vault at Felbrigg, where it lies among the real Windhams and the sham. Tom Saul, an old coachman, together with a few cronies of the Norfolk Tap, were the mourners.

Felbrigg had already passed out of the family, and had been purchased by a man whose career was itself a romance.

John Kitton, who bought the estate and the Hall as they stood, including the furniture, library, and the entire appointments of the house, had been a grocer in a small way of business—one may almost say he had owned a small chandler's shop—in Norwich. His rise dated from a small speculation in wheat shipped from Russia on the eve of the Crimean War. By the time it had reached these shores the price of grain had become enormously enhanced, and he netted a very handsome profit. His next venture, of sending out a heavy shipment of oil-cake to the Crimea, was equally successful, and laid a solid basis for the great fortune this clever man of business rapidly acquired. The sum he is stated to have given, in one cheque, for Felbrigg, "lock, stock, and barrel," when the estate was sold under "Mad Windham's" bankruptcy, was £137,000. He then changed his name to Ketton, and set up as a country squire. He died, aged sixty-one, in 1872.

When Augustus Hare visited Felbrigg in 1885, he found Ketton's daughters had adopted the Windhams and all their heirlooms and traditions, as though they were their very own. Nothing whatever had been removed at the sale, and, as a matter of fact, the ancient family portraits and the statesman's library are here, even now. Said Miss Ketton: "Mr. Windham comes every night to look after his favourite books in the library.

He goes straight to the shelves where they are: we hear him moving the tables and the chairs about; we never disturb him, though, for we intend to be ghosts ourselves some day, and to come about the old place, just as he does"—so that Felbrigg Hall bids fair to become a congested area, in the spookish sort.

LII

THERE can be few more delightful woodlands than those of Felbrigg, and no more romantic approach to a seaside than that of the woodland road which goes, as though tunnelled through the trees, steeply down from Felbrigg's height to Cromer's level. In the distance, down there, you see the illimitable sea, Cromer's great church tower standing up against it, and the houses of the town clustered around—a little group set in a vast expanse of salt water and green fields. This is the most delightful way into Cromer, but we may not take it. Like Moses, permitted merely to look upon the Promised Land, we must only gaze upon that road and retrace our route to Roughton, there to pick up the coach-road, by no means so delightful and prepossessing an entrance to Cromer.

It is, however, only comparatively that this entrance is to be despised. It is true it leads past the railway station and a lengthy line of suburbs, down a long gradient, with houses instead

of seascape in front of you; but if, indeed, everything be newly created and baldly uninteresting, at least there is nothing sordidly unprosperous in view, and everything is spick-and-span, even to the road-paving, which in every street in Cromer is composed of asphalte. Almost every one of these smart red-brick villas is of the boarding-house order, and only when the very centre of the town is reached, by the church, do the shops commence.

Cromer, until modern times a small fishing village, but now grown to the proud estate of a fashionable, expensive, and exclusive seaside resort, was once a portion of the town of Shipden, and lay quite half a mile distant from the sea. "Shipedana" and "Scepedene," the names by which Shipden is referred to in the "Domesday Book," remind us that Shipden was not necessarily merely a place of ships, but that the name perhaps came originally from Anglo-Saxon words meaning a sheep pasture. Vague accounts still tell how Shipden was suddenly destroyed by a violent storm and eruption of the sea in the reign of Henry IV., and half a mile out to sea is still visible, at exceptionally low tides, the mass of flint walling called the "Church Rock," said to be the remains of Shipden church. A Yarmouth excursion steamer was wrecked on it in the summer of 1888.

Cromer was spoken of in 1374, and again in 1382, as "Crowmere." Although it thus, by the disappearance of Shipden, was thrust into the foremost place, it never attained the size of that

unfortunate town. The sea was advancing too surely for a repetition of Shipden's fate to be dared. In 1551, if we may judge from the petition then presented to the Privy Council, Cromer was in sore case:—

"It is situate and adjoining so near the sees that of late in our memorye, by the rages and surges of the same sees, the number of a grete sort of houses knowen by us have been swallowed uppe and drownded. The inhabitants hathe to their grete and importunate charges defended the same by making of grete peers, and dayle put to insatiable charges scharse and onetheable to be borne of the same inhabitants."

This anxiety seems to have made havoc with their literary composition. A direct result of this petition was the grant, thirty years later, of a licence to levy dues upon wheat, barley, and malt, the revenue from them to be applied in defending the town from the sea; but when Taylor, the "Water Poet," visited Cromer on his "Very Merry—Wherry—Ferry Voyage" round the coast in 1623, the sea was still encroaching, and he describes the place in doleful strain:—

> It is an ancient market-town that stands
> Upon a lofty cliff of mould'ring sands;
> The sea against the cliffs doth daily beat,
> And every tide into the land doth eat.
> The town is poor, unable by expense,
> Against the raging seas to make defence,
> And every day it eateth further in,
> Still waiting, washing down the sand doth run.
>
> . . . . . .

> A goodly church stands on these brittle grounds,
> Not many fairer in Great Britain's bounds;
> And if the sea shall swallow it, as some fear,
> 'Tis not ten thousand pounds the like could rear.

Very true; but the encroaching ocean has not made such great headway since then as might have been expected from past history, and from the soft nature of the cliffs on whose crest the town stands. Those cliffs, 100 feet high, are composed of sand, gravel, and clay, made rotten by landsprings, and only saved from further decay in front of the town by heavy concrete walls.

The church, of whose grandeur Taylor speaks so highly, is the only building in Cromer of any age, and is the town's one land and sea mark. There is no view of Cromer which does not include its great tower, rising to a height of 159 feet, and the very inevitableness of it is apt at last to change the admiration of a first glimpse into the intolerable boredom created by photographic views from every conceivable and inconceivable point. This great and beautiful building, in the lofty and airy Perpendicular style, built shortly after Shipden was destroyed, owes its present perfect state of repair to the restoration, begun in 1863. Before that work was undertaken, the chancel was a roofless ruin, and had been in that condition ever since 1681, when it was purposely destroyed with gunpowder. The discredit of this act of vandalism, given by popular legend to Cromwell, is an injustice to the Lord Protector. The real vandal was the Rev. Thomas Gill, Rector of Ingworth,

CROMER IN 1830. *From a print after T. Creswick, R.A.*

lessee of the great tithes under the Bishop of Ely. As lessee, an obligation was laid upon him to keep the chancel in repair, and to save himself expense he obtained permission to destroy it.

The church and its well-kept churchyard, in the very centre of the little town, give the place all the dignity of a cathedral city. Modern commercial buildings, many-storeyed and lofty, are, however, detracting something from the apparent height and great bulk of the church. The old rustic stones in the churchyard still remain, and look strange in the unwonted urban modernity of their surroundings: doubtless some "improving" hand will shortly away with them. Among these simple memorials one may see, prominently displayed, that of five mariners, part of the crew of the *Trent*, of North Shields, who were drowned on Cromer beach in the great storm of February, 1836; while a memorial to one John Nurse, who left the world without regret, says:—

> Farewell, Vain World,
> I've seen enough of the,
> & careless I am what you
> Can say or do to me.
> I fear no threats from
> An infernal crew;
> My day is past, and I bid
> The world "Adieu."

LIII

It was somewhere about the beginning of the nineteenth century, contemporaneously with the general rise of seaside resorts, that the invigorating air of Cromer first began to attract attention, and so early as 1806 an anonymous visitor, seeking health here, published *Cromer: a Descriptive Poem*, a wearisome production of several hundred lines, in blank—very blank—verse. The reader shall be spared his rhapsodies on the sea, but his circuitous description of a taxed cart, typical of his literary method, is not without its unconscious humour:—

> Quiet the steady *Sociable* proceeds,
> No danger in its course, and in the rear
> The humbler vehicle, that bears displayed,
> In letters legible to ev'ry eye,
> The stamp of fiscal avarice.

If brevity be, indeed, the soul of wit, how witless this laboured effort!

If our poet could but return and his poem were to do again, he would have to wrestle with very changed conditions, and would probably give us something like this:—

> Noisy, th' effluvious motor-car appears,
> Throbbing and shaking like a jelly:
> Smelling to Heaven in pestiferous clouds
> Of ill-combusted petrol, blue and beastly.

Danger in its course of twenty miles
An hour, and in the rear a frightened horse
And battered trap. Wrecking the shops,
Frightening the old ladies, upsetting the Bath chairs,
Crumpling up the casual cyclist,
And, generally, playing the very deuce
With everything, it goes. Its licence plates
Boldly inscribed, designed by law to be
Legible to ev'ry eye, artfully obscured
With wraps and rugs. Give me my gun.

And so forth. There is room for lengthy eloquence on the subject.

Cromer has in these later years become the Motor Cad's Paradise. Here are the gorgeous "hotels" beloved of his little soul, and here the good roads he can render dangerous to others with little risk to himself.

A wide gulf separates the Cromer of that poet's time and ours, but the change that has taken place is quite recent, and astonishingly sudden. At the close of Georgian days a certain vogue had been established, and a Bath House was built under the cliff. This was washed away during the storm and high tide in 1836, but the "Bath Hotel" of that period, stuccoed, white-painted, midway between cliff-top and sea, remains, together with a few of the early Victorian bay-windowed seaside lodging-houses, small but comfortable, that line the narrow streets near the cliffs' edge. It was following this great storm of 1836 that the first of Cromer's defensive sea-walls was built; but the greater storm of 1845 wrecked it and washed away the timber jetty,

built in 1822, at a cost of £1,400. What Cromer was like at this period may be judged from the illustration, which clearly shows how, from the picturesque point of view, it has been spoiled.

In those days before railways, sea-borne goods came cheapest to Cromer, on whose sands the cargo-boats of small burden were beached and unloaded between tides. The few houses for the accommodation of summer visitors had not overshadowed the fisher-village, and the narrow streets remained paved, as from time immemorial they had been, with cobble-stones. The great people, locally, of that period were the allied families of Gurneys, Buxtons, and Hoares, of whom the few petty shopkeepers stood so greatly in awe that no visitors could count upon being able to purchase anything until those tradesfolk had made quite certain those grand seigneurs were not likely to require the articles in demand. The railway, which altered all this, was long kept away by the exclusives, but it came at last, and, backed by the sentimental gush of Mr. Clement Scott's writings on what he was pleased to call "Poppyland," spoiled Cromer. The public read the articles on "Poppyland," and fell all over the place. There are those—and among them the present writer—who are sick of the name of "Poppyland," and for whom Overstrand is spoiled by that much-quoted poem, the "Garden of Sleep," on which the Great Eastern Railway guide-book writers, and the manufacturers of

CROMER.

pictorial post-cards have traded, in and out of season.

The evolution of Cromer from fisher-village to fashionable resort was well on the way in 1892, when Sir Evelyn Baring, who in 1841 was born at the early nineteenth century mansion called Cromer Hall, took the title of Cromer on his being created a Viscount; and the process was completed in the summer of 1901, when the pleasure Pier, constructed at a cost of £43,000, was opened. It replaced the wooden Jetty built at a cost of £6,000, after the storm of 1845, and battered to pieces in 1897. The new Pier, ornamental, and rather alien in appearance, is evidence of Cromer's determination to be select and to stand aloof from popular vulgarities. Here those who seek the automatic machine shall not find, and no stalls, and no advertisements are permitted. At Cromer, in fact, the higher vulgarity is cultivated, just as at Yarmouth you plumb the depths of the lower variety. The tripper, holiday-making at Yarmouth, who comes over to see what Cromer is like, and finds no whelk and oyster stalls, and no popular entertainments on the sands, thinks it dull; and the average man, wandering along the Lighthouse cliffs in danger of having an eye knocked out by the wealthy and selfish vulgarians who practise golf there, is prone to consider Cromer a fine place, except for the people who frequent it, and for whose benefit the giant hotels facing the sea have been built, and still are building.

Looking upwards from the Pier, you see a long line of these great caravanserai, skirting the cliff-top. The Hôtel de Paris, the Hôtel Métropole, and others with titles equally English, astonish the beholder, not only with their appearance on what was until recently the rural Norfolk coast, but also with the rashness that reared such heavy loads of bricks on a seaboard so notoriously storm-swept and on the crest of crumbling cliffs. It does not need a prophet of very great prescience to declare that either disaster must overtake them or the cliffs must, from time to time, be strengthened at enormous cost, to bear the weight. Cromer has been fortunate not to have suffered so much as thought inevitable three hundred years ago, but the cliffs on either side have been eaten away, and have lately suffered, to such an extent, that the land it stands upon will soon be a promontory, in advance of the general coast-line, and must accordingly be more exposed.

Meanwhile, the many-towered steep, whose sky-line is so picturesquely serrated with cupolas and spires, is wonderfully effective when viewed from the beach on some kindly day of hazy effects, when the raw edges of those fire-new hotels are softened down, and imagination is given a chance. *Then* the sea-front of Cromer is even more charming than it was in Creswick's time, and has something of the Arabian Nights order of lordliness.

Such is Cromer, whose population is mounting up to 4,000 souls. The beauty of its situation is unquestionable, the purity and bracing qualities of its air proverbial, and the hardiness of its fishermen well known. But (to the great joy of the Great Eastern Railway) it is no longer unspotted from the world, and has become modish and sophisticated. It is a very pretty mode and a coquettish sophistication, and if indeed you do very speedily exhaust Cromer itself—why, then the magnificent *hinterland* of wild tumbled hills and dark fir-woods is well-nigh inexhaustible. But the solitude and the natural life of the seaboard villages are extinct, even as are those features of Cromer. Summer existence there is like that of the midges and butterflies; gay, without care.

In winter, however, when the holiday folk are gone, its modern status lies heavy, like a shadow, on one: for then the whole place, given over, body and soul, to providing for visitors, is in doleful dumps. This is the dark reverse of that bright summer picture, and the fact that Cromer's season is only of eight or ten weeks' duration means many little domestic miseries. To stand in the empty October streets and meet the last bathing machine being drawn up from the deserted beach to winter quarters; to see the restaurants and tea-shops without customers, and cards offering rooms to let in most of the houses, is to realise that a fisher-village on an open coast, without river or harbour, and consequently no

trade, cannot suddenly become a resort without a tragical side to its comedy. I stand on the cliff-top as night shuts down over the North Sea, and I have the place wholly to myself. The hotels have switched on their electric lights, but those rooms, so gay and crowded in August, are now for the most part empty. I am sorry for the Cromer that was, and much more sorry for the Cromer that is.

THE END.

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